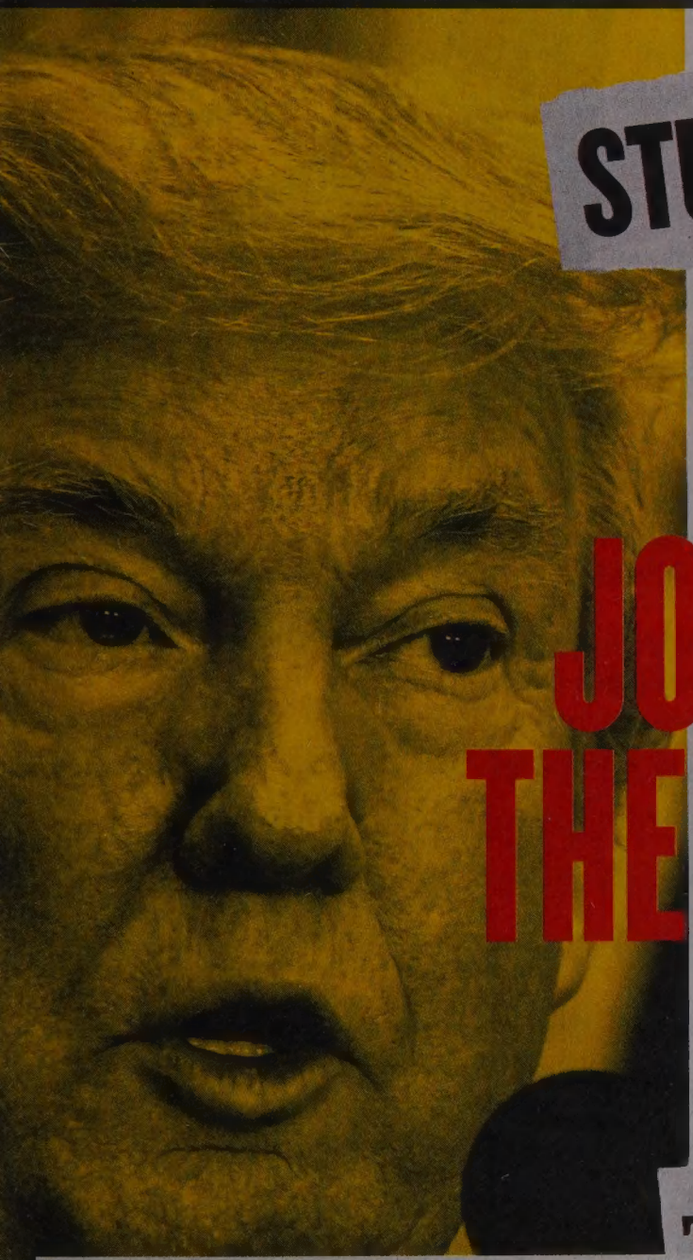
STOPPING KAVANAUGH — BRUCE SHAPIRO

THE NEW SURVIVAL SOCIALISM — LAURA FLANDERS

THE Nation.



STUPID TRUMP TRICKS

A QUISLING AND HIS ENABLERS

JOURNALISM IN THE AGE OF TRUMP

What's missing and what matters.

MICHAEL MASSING

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Unhinged in Helsinki

Donald Trump, that self-described "very stable genius," delivered a remarkably unhinged performance in his press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin after their Helsinki summit. Trump used the global stage to savage Democrats and to attack the Mueller investigation and his own intelligence officials, while once more boasting about his election victory. Putin, clearly pleased to be accorded Trump's public respect, noted that as "major nuclear powers, we bear special responsibility for maintaining international security."

Not surprisingly, Trump's remarks triggered a furious reaction. Former CIA director John Brennan called them "treasonous." The liberal activist group MoveOn echoed the charge. Republican Senator John McCain called it "one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory." House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi suggested that Trump's behavior "proves" that the Russians "must have something on the president."

In this toxic atmosphere, it is worth parsing the inane from the sensible in what the president said. Trump's bizarre comments on Russian interference in the 2016 election made it clear that special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation should continue. When asked about that interference, Trump reverted to his standard claim of "no collusion" and indicated that, in a choice between the conclusions of his own intelligence officials (followed up by the recent indictment of 12 Russian military-intelligence officials) and Putin's denials, he leaned toward the latter.

What is surreal about Trump's behavior is less his manic defensiveness about the legitimacy of his election victory than his apparent disinterest in defending our elections going forward. With Trump's own director of national intelligence—conservative former Republican senator Dan Coats—concluding that Russian interference continues to this day, Trump refused to publicly denounce that interference or warn Putin against persisting in it. Foreign powers, corporations, and billionaires may well see this as a green light for increased meddling in US elections.

Worse, the administration and the Republican-controlled Congress have done virtually nothing to bolster free elections or protect them from such meddling. Our digital-age voting systems are vulnerable to hackers based anywhere. The solutions will require a much higher level of security for everything from voter-registration records to the tabulation of ballots with verifiable paper trails. But the greatest threat to our elections comes from hyper-partisan politics: gerrymandering electoral districts, erecting obstacles to registration and voting, purging voter rolls, gutting the Voting Rights Act, and, of course, facilitating the flow of big money—much of it undisclosed—into political campaigns. Under the Republicans, Congress has blocked sensible election-law reform. And right-wing donors and activists continue to push voter-suppression schemes at the state level—schemes that would be given even freer rein if Brett Kavanaugh is confirmed as the next Supreme Court justice. Citizens must demand reforms, and hold politicians accountable if they stand in the way.

Trump's serial lying is infamous—yet just because Trump says something doesn't necessarily mean it's false. He began the press conference by making the sensible case that it's better to negotiate than to isolate. "The disagreements between our two countries are well-known, and President Putin and I discussed them at length today," he said. "But if we're going to solve many of the problems facing our world, then we are going to have to find ways to cooperate in pursuit of shared interests.... Constructive dialogue between the United States and Russia affords the opportunity to open new pathways toward peace and stability in our world."

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VOLUME 307, NUMBER 4,
August 13/20, 2018

The digital version of this issue is available to all subscribers July 19 at TheNation.com.

BY THE NUMBERS

351

Nicaraguans killed as the result of a government crackdown on protests between April 19 and July 10, according to the Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights; previously, the country boasted the lowest homicide rate in Central America

5

Nicaraguan news channels taken off the air for covering the protests in April

$157

Average monthly wage of a Nicaraguan factory worker—the lowest in Central America

5%

Reduction in social-security payments to retirees under the reforms that President Daniel Ortega announced on April 16 but rescinded six days later in hopes of quelling the unrest

96%

Proportion of the GDP belonging to the private sector in Nicaragua, a socialist country

—Maia Hibbett

Trump should not be scorned for simply convening a summit. The United States and Russia have a common stake in reducing tensions. Moreover, if the two powers continue to talk and, as Putin summarized the goals, if they manage to restart the arms-reduction talks, revive a working group on international terrorism, work together to forge peace and bring humanitarian relief to Syria, and enforce the Minsk agreements in Ukraine, then important progress will have been made. In any case, Trump is not wrong to say that attempting to reduce the tensions that have been building for years is a "good thing."

Although he was widely reviled for it, Trump is also not wrong to say that both powers have contributed to the deteriorating relations. Leaders of the US national-security establishment protest our country's innocence regarding the tensions in Georgia and Ukraine. But it was perhaps the wisest of them, the eminent diplomat George Kennan, who warned in 1998 that the decision to extend NATO to Russia's borders was a "tragic mistake" that would eventually provoke a hostile response. "I think it is the beginning of a new cold war," Kennan said presciently. "I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies."

Earlier in July, *The Nation* released an open letter signed by a score of leading public scholars, activists, and former US officials calling for a "common ground to safeguard common interests," including both protecting US elections and easing the current state of enmity between the two nuclear superpowers. The independent investigation into Russian interference should continue to its conclusion. Reforming our elections to ensure that they are free and fair is an imperative. And engaging the Russians to reduce tensions and resolve crises is both sensible and long overdue. KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

Why We Fight

Trump's pick champions institutionalized incivility.

COMMENT

Is it worth fighting Brett Kavanaugh? Let's start here: Don't assume Judge Kavanaugh's confirmation is a done deal. Since 1968, seven Supreme Court nominees from both parties—representing 35 percent of the open seats—have failed. Those are pretty interesting odds, especially in a Senate that may change hands in January. Seemingly inevitable Supreme Court nominations fall by the wayside for all kinds of reasons. With Kavanaugh, there's already the strange story of his running up overwhelming personal debt for baseball tickets, and his sudden bailout by unnamed individuals. A judge that desperate to impress his pals may have other bad habits.

Since 1968, seven Supreme Court nominees have failed.

Then there are the Kavanaugh memos—reams of them from his days as staff secretary in the George W. Bush White House post-9/11—that were never disclosed during his first confirmation to the federal bench. Just one Kavanaugh e-mail in defense of torture, rendition, or warrantless surveillance could be enough to send Senator Rand Paul into opposition, or rouse former POW John McCain from his mortal bed for one final "no" vote. Mitch McConnell knows it, which is why the Senate majority leader tried to dissuade the White House from nominating this seemingly safe GOP careerist.

Those memos take on special meaning in the age of Trump, because it is already clear that in the woolly menagerie of conservative jurists, Kavanaugh is of the "strong executive" subspecies—a straight-line descendant of Nixon's man, William Rehnquist. The late chief justice fetishized the power of the executive branch and was most interested in giving presidents the unilateral authority to wage war, spy on citizens, and incarcerate the poor—all while stripping the federal government of its authority to protect civil rights.

Kavanaugh himself has gone out of his way to discuss his affinity with Rehnquist. In a speech last fall, he called him "my first judicial hero" and went on to praise the chief justice for his stands on "criminal procedure, religion, federalism, unenumerated rights and administrative law." So it seems important to recall a few things about this particular jurist. From his earliest years as a clerk to Justice Robert Jackson, Rehnquist bitterly opposed the civil-rights movement; he even wrote a notorious memo for Jackson arguing against the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* and defending school segregation. In another case, Rehnquist wrote to Jackson: "It is about time the Court faced the fact that the white people of the South do not like the colored people; the Constitution…did not appoint the Court as a sociological watchdog."

As deputy attorney general in the Nixon White House, Rehnquist penned a white paper defending the president's secret bombing of Cambodia and proposing a breathtaking expansion of presidential war powers—a memo that, a generation later, Kavanaugh's colleagues in the Bush White House used as justification for torture. Both on and off the bench, Rehnquist fought the exclusionary rule barring illegally obtained evidence. He supported free speech when it came to school prayer but sided against First Amendment protections in 100 percent of the press-freedom cases that divided the Court. And, of course, as an associate justice and later as chief justice, Rehnquist devoted himself to opposing abortion rights in every case from *Roe v. Wade* on.

All of this stands in marked contrast to retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy, for whom Kavanaugh once clerked. Kennedy, though a Reagan conservative, was still at times a devoted and humane libertarian: He argued for and voted to extend abortion rights; to restrain the government's control of sexuality; and to defend the rights of society's most despised prisoners, such as terrorist detainees and those on death row.

Kavanaugh's identification with Rehnquist's maximum-leader jurisprudence is all the more alarming given the Mueller investigation and President Trump's legal troubles. A lot of attention has been paid to his 2009 *Minnesota Law Review* article, in which he argued that Congress ought to protect

(continued on page 8)

Asking for a Friend

Nasty, Brutish, and Left

Dear Liza,

I just hosted this guy for six days. He spoke at a conference I helped organize. He didn't say "Thank you" to me, either publicly or privately. His politics are right on—we believe in the same things and dislike the same people—but he was a total* boor. *He would walk into my kitchen in the morning and grunt—not even a "Good morning"! He never acknowledged any of my work, the great conference, or the amazing woman who delivered the other plenary lecture. He talked nonstop and alienated almost every person who came into contact with him. He will never get an invite back here—ever. And yet he complains bitterly about his career and being treated like shit.

He is over 60. Is it too late for him? Should I not bother giving him a piece of my mind?

I'm glad he came, but I think these kinds of male socialists have actually held back political solidarity by being such* dicks. *He was so full of himself and his labor strategy and his connection to Jeremy Corbyn. I kept thinking, "Oh, shit—this guy is out there doing damage to the Labour left by acting like an entitled, drunken 16-year-old."

These men do not grow up!!! What should we do?

—Hostess With the Mostest (Feminist Rage)

Dear Hostess,

Your story reminds me of a couple I know who hosted a celebrity leftist back in the 1990s. He stayed for two weeks and never took a shower. He was messy and expected them to clean up after him. At one point he declared, addressing the woman of the couple, "I'm ready for my tea now." It's ridiculous that men like this still exist, and it's high time someone schooled them.

Your oafish guest could redeem himself (slightly) with a courteous thank-you note, but if that's not forthcoming, Hostess, do him—and the movement—a favor and give him some constructive criticism.

He has, quite possibly, decades of political life left. His alienating behavior could continue to hurt his own career (no doubt his manners have much to do with why he's been "treated like shit," though I'm sure he imagines it's because of his politics). As you suggest, without an intervention, he'll also continue to make democratic-socialist politics look bad. Particularly in the United States and the UK, the failings of men like this are easily exploited by neoliberals who don't wish us well (infuriatingly, since we all know plenty of neoliberal misogynists). Worse, such behavior from celebrated left-wing men is also divisive, sending the message that women don't belong in our movement's intellectual circles.

Questions? Ask Liza at TheNation.com/article/asking-for-a-friend.

He's certainly not too old to change his ways. If you live too far away to talk in person, write him an e-mail. Choose a few of the most serious offenses—not many of us could absorb such a long list of our shortcomings, no matter how much we might deserve the upbraiding. I notice you do have kind things to say about his visit: You enjoyed connecting with a like-minded comrade, and you were glad he came. Open and close with these generous thoughts; in between, convey the bruising downsides of hosting him.

He won't be grateful. He might even spread the word that you're a cruel harpy. But who cares? You don't need him, personally, professionally, or politically. Besides, he needs to hear it—and the global left needs you to speak up.

(continued on page 9)

ILLUSTRATED BY **JOANNA NEBORSKY**

OPEN LETTER

True National Security

The Nation has published an open letter, co-signed by more than 20 prominent figures, appealing to US officials to set a new course in our country's relations with Russia as well as to fortify our elections against both unlawful intrusions and official policies of voter suppression. Timed to mark President Trump's attendance at the NATO summit and his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the letter encourages robust public debate and points a way forward for improving diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The open letter ends with a directive for policy-makers and officeholders: "No political advantage, real or imagined, could possibly compensate for the consequences if even a fraction of US and Russian arsenals were to be utilized in a thermonuclear exchange. The tacit pretense that the worsening of US-Russian relations does not worsen the odds of survival for the next generations is profoundly false. Concrete steps can and must be taken to ease tensions between the nuclear superpowers."

The people who have signed the letter include activists like the **Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II** and **Gloria Steinem**, politicians such as former New Mexico governor **Bill Richardson** and former congresswoman **Pat Schroeder**, filmmaker **Michael Moore**, academics like **Noam Chomsky** and **Frances Fox Piven**, and Pulitzer Prize–winning novelists **Alice Walker** and **Viet Thanh Nguyen**.

You can read the letter in full and add your signature at **TheNation.com/open-letter**.

Common Ground: For Secure Elections and True National Security

An open letter by Gloria Steinem, Noam Chomsky, John Dean, Governor Bill Richardson, Walter Mosley, Michael Moore, Valerie Plame, and others.

By The Nation

Many Americans remain deeply concerned about reports of Russian interference with the 2016 election. Meanwhile, relations between the United States and Russia are at their lowest and most dangerous point in several decades. For the sake of democracy at home and true national security, we must reach common ground to safeguard common

Eric Alterman

Sy Hersh vs. the World

The most valuable living reporter disdained those who cozied up to power.

Not many private individuals have been of greater public service, to the United States and the world, than Seymour Myron Hersh. Certainly, no journalist can match his record for the kinds of scoops that—until recently, anyway—have helped to preserve our democracy.

Hersh, who, at 81, has just published a memoir simply called *Reporter*, has single-handedly broken more stories of genuine world-historical significance than any reporter alive (or dead, perhaps). His book is perfectly titled, because—and I say this in admiration—a reporter is all Hersh is. Well, maybe he's a good husband or father or a decent tennis player, but you won't learn anything about that in his book. Hersh's only interest in his 50-plus years of reporting has been to get "the story." He does not care that he sometimes must rely on anonymous sources or that some of his biggest exclusives have come from mass murderers, tyrants, and war criminals. No less significant, he does not care whether the story causes political problems for the institutions that employ him. He admits that he does occasionally hold things back to retain his sources, but even that is only in the service of future stories. These characteristics have ensured that Hersh has worked at quite a few places.

Though our respective careers have had little in common, Hersh and I share a mentor: Izzy Stone, who worked for this magazine from 1939 through 1946 and famously published an independent newsletter, *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, from 1953 to 1971. In 1966, shortly after Hersh made it to Washington as a reporter for the Associated Press, Stone called him out of the blue before 6 AM on a Sunday to discuss Vietnam. The two men "talked incessantly about how to do better reporting," and Hersh recalls feeling that he was "in the hands of a master," adding: "It was to the shame of the mainstream media—and my pipe smoker colleagues in the Pentagon pressroom—that his biweekly reports and analyses as publisher of *I.F. Stone's Weekly* were viewed as little more than a nuisance."

Hersh took on Stone's values: complete intellectual independence and reportorial indefatigableness. And once he broke the story of the My Lai massacre for the tiny Dispatch News Service, he persuaded America's most powerful media institutions to give him the resources to break bigger and bigger ones, especially during his long, troubled tenure at *The New York Times*. It was a professional marriage made in hell. As Bill Kovach, former *Times* Washington bureau chief, observed, Hersh was battling a culture "at a newspaper that hated to be beaten, but didn't really want to be first."

The *Times*, of course, is representative of American journalism's zeitgeist. The late David Broder was perhaps the most revered pundit in the latter decades of the 20th century. He spoke openly, late in his career, of his aversion to "writing stories that I know will add to the depth of an already deep public cynicism about what's going on in this country." Elite journalists were, as the famous *Times* political reporter R.W. "Johnny" Apple explained, extremely wary of "full-throated debate" owing to its "costs: to national unity, to confidence in the electoral process, and to respect for leaders in general." Both men, it should be noted, said this to tamp down dissent over President George W. Bush's dishonest and ultimately disastrous campaign to invade Iraq. Hersh, the man who revealed the torture at Abu Ghraib and the US assassination squads operating in that catastrophic war zone, was a journalist cut from a different cloth.

Seymour Hersh, the man who revealed the torture at Abu Ghraib, was a journalist cut from a different cloth.

Even before My Lai, Hersh was uncovering stories that changed the way the US government operated. His first big article—on US chemical-weapons facilities—resulted in a fundamental change in America's policy on the issue. I could fill the rest of this column with nothing but a list of Hersh's historically significant scoops. He broke the story that the CIA "conducted a massive, illegal domestic intelligence operation," which included the inspection of mail; that the United States participated in overthrowing the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile; that the US secretly bombed Cambodia during the Vietnam War; and that Henry Kissinger

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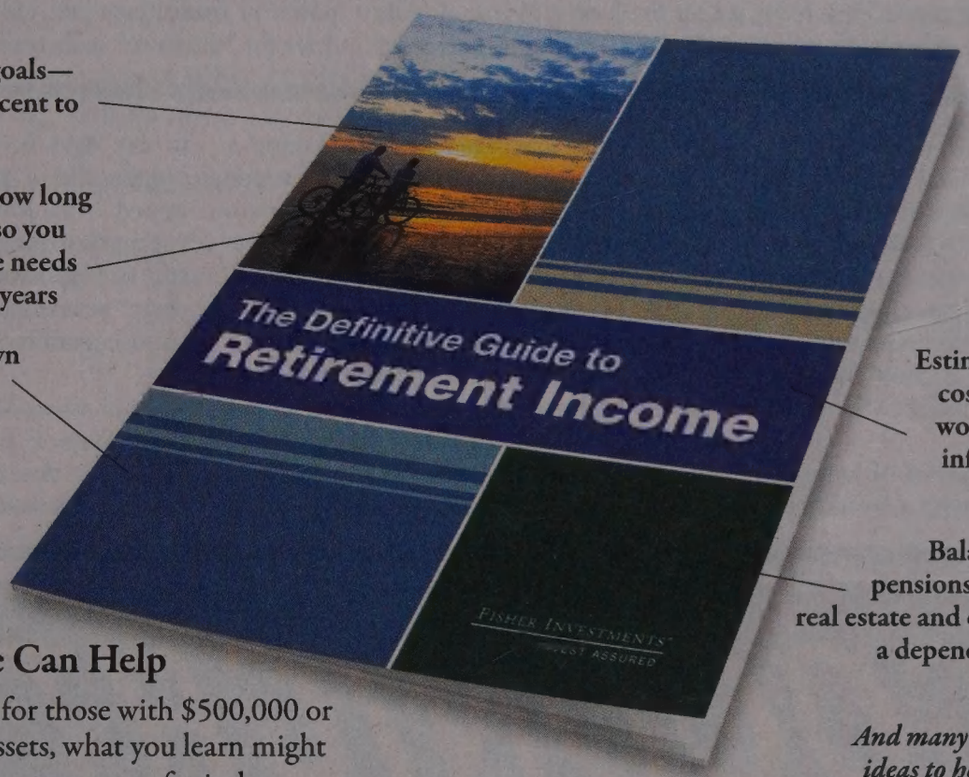

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had the phones of reporters and his own staff wiretapped during the Nixon administration. Hersh proceeded to torment every subsequent US president or lying cabinet member by ferreting out truths that other journalists could not or would not attempt to uncover—though, it should be added, no one inspired his journalistic juices like Nixon and Kissinger.

Today, there are few publications with the will and the means to set truly dogged reporters on the country's most powerful institutions.

These same officials sought to undermine Hersh. In *Reporter*, Kissinger, Dick Cheney, and many others are quoted in internal government documents looking for ways to shut him down. The *Times* stood by him, until it didn't anymore. *The New Yorker* parted ways with Hersh over shocking stories from Syria and Pakistan that no one has been able to corroborate. Hersh has made mistakes, of course, and the stories rejected by *The New Yorker*—which have appeared in either the *London Review of Books* or the German newspaper *Die Welt*—do strike this reader as depending too much on unnamed sources. He would also be the first to admit that he needs an editor, as much as he hates having them.

Reporter comes graced with a blurb from the novelist John le Carré, who writes, "This book is essential reading for every journalist and aspiring journalist the world over." But what is perhaps most poignant about this fantastic yarn is how far journalism has drifted from the days when the *Times* would actually publish the kinds of investigations that Hersh specialized in, let alone encourage and invest in such a muckraker. What's more, there were once dozens of other journalists at mainstream publications trying to match his exposés. Today, there are few publications with the will and the means to set truly dogged, independent-minded reporters on the country's most powerful institutions and individuals. Hersh's ferocious drive for "the story" sadly reads like ancient history. ■

(continued from page 4)

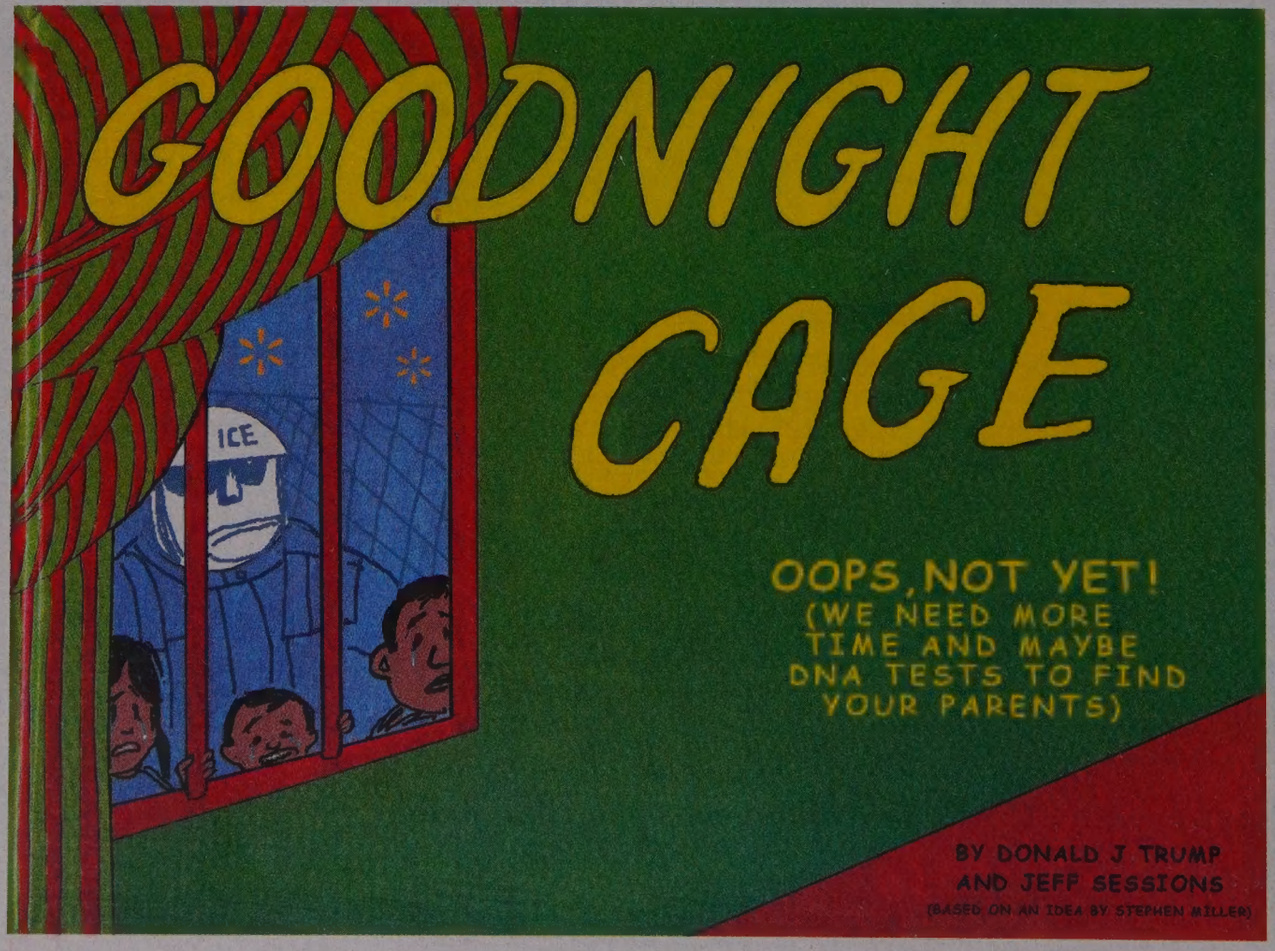
the president from criminal and civil cases while he's in office. While that alone doesn't necessarily predict how Kavanaugh would vote should he have to review a subpoena or indictment of the president, taken together with his reverence for Rehnquist, it does suggest that he would cocoon the presidency from accountability, even for serious criminal acts.

There's been much praise of Judge Kavanaugh from friends with very different politics. But the Senate is confirming a Supreme Court justice, not a Little League coach. However much Kavanaugh prizes civility in his private life, the causes he champions on the bench are about institutionalized incivility. The political brutality of the Trump era is rooted in the Rehnquist right's decades-long campaign to undo the modern American social contract—New Deal business regulations, civil rights, environmental protections, and sexual equality—and to restore executive power to the days before civil-liberties-minded judges and a post-Watergate Congress reined it in. Kavanaugh's career-long devotion to strong-arm jurisprudence should stir to opposition anyone, regardless of party, worried by the current authoritarian occupation of the White House.

BRUCE SHAPIRO

Bruce Shapiro, a contributing editor to The Nation, *is the executive director of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma.*

COMIX NATION
PETER KUPER


GOODNIGHT CAGE
ICE
OOPS, NOT YET!
(WE NEED MORE TIME AND MAYBE DNA TESTS TO FIND YOUR PARENTS)
BY DONALD J TRUMP AND JEFF SESSIONS
(BASED ON AN IDEA BY STEPHEN MILLER)

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(continued from page 5)

Dear Liza,

When a public figure commits suicide, you often see people on social media offering to be a personal suicide hotline of sorts for anyone in their circle who might also be suffering ("I'm here for you!"). The intention is great, but I'm skeptical that people who haven't been trained to handle this problem should be taking it on.

So I'm wondering: What's the socialist view on how to manage this very difficult situation, when mental-health care is so lacking and people, on an individual level, are ill-equipped to provide it for serious distress? What's the good, comradely thing to do?

—Would-Be Samaritan

Dear Samaritan,

The kinds of posts you're describing are not only well-meaning; they may actually help. Social isolation is a major cause of severe depression and suicide. Seeing that someone you know cares and is willing to help "diminishes that sense of social isolation and tethers you to the world," says Dr. Tony Charuvastra, a psychiatrist and clinical assistant professor at New York University's Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. "We can't replace social connection with expertise. The social fabric is so important."

Dr. Charuvastra notes that shame prevents many people from seeking help. These social-media posts can help destigmatize mental illness, making it easier to reach out. They're also important because suicide is often an impulsive act: Many people who attempt it don't try again. This means that any effort to intervene can make a difference. In 2010, *GQ* published an article, "The Suicide Catcher," about a man who stationed himself on a bridge over the Yangtze River in China and physically prevented people from jumping off. He wasn't a trained professional, but given what we know about suicide and impulsivity, he probably saved many lives.

Of course, you're right that in addition to fellowship of this kind, a person who is suicidal needs professional help. If you're talking with a suicidal person, suggest calling a suicide hotline together, or offer to go with them to the hospital. If they're already being treated for mental illness, urge them to call their therapist.

You're also right to fight for socialism if you're concerned about this issue. Stephen Platt, a professor emeritus of health-policy research at the University of Edinburgh, has reviewed the literature and notes that, in rich countries, there's a strong connection between inequality and rising suicide rates. Lower-income, downwardly mobile, or unemployed white men are especially at risk. And, as you correctly observe, many people have no access to mental-health care, which has to be a demand of any struggle to socialize medicine.

Of course, fighting for a better world doesn't help those who are feeling suicidal right now. But our socialist desire for a more collective society can inspire us to help people in our own communities feel a bit more connected. ■

BREAKING THE BANK

Anger and Austerity

In June, thousands of people in Jordan took to the streets to protest shrinking government subsidies and proposed tax hikes—measures implemented at the behest of the International Monetary Fund, which extended credit to the economically beleaguered nation as it strains to host some 1.3 million Syrian refugees.

One month later, protesters in Haiti shut down the capital, Port-au-Prince, after the government there announced that it was increasing fuel prices in order to gain access to $96 million in loans and grants from international donors, including the IMF and the World Bank. Embassies shuttered and airlines canceled flights as Haitians—6 million of whom live on less than $2.25 per day—organized rallies and burned tires. The unrest prompted the Haitian prime minister to cancel the price hikes and eventually resign, but the IMF is still demanding that the government raise the cost of fuel.

At the same time as the protests in Haiti, demonstrators in Buenos Aires, Argentina, held signs that read "Independence Can't Be Negotiated" and "No to the IMF." Strikes and work stoppages have intermittently paralyzed the South American nation, as labor leaders blame the IMF for the Argentine government's plan to curb government salaries amid rising inflation.

Across the world, people are demanding an end to austerity, especially when it's imposed as a precondition for economic assistance. As the protesters in Jordan chanted, "We will not be ruled by the World Bank."

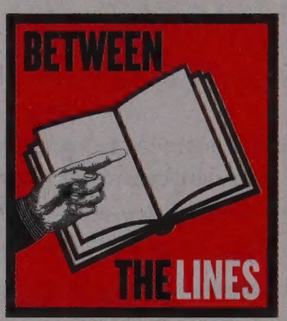
—Chris Gelardi

Laila Lalami

Zero Tolerance Continues

What will stop Trump from normalizing the mass internment of immigrants?

This is where we stand: A few months ago, a president who lost the popular vote introduced a "zero tolerance" policy on undocumented immigrants. In order to implement it, his attorney general—a man with a known history of racism—began detaining and prosecuting all immigrants and asylum-seekers who unlawfully crossed the southwestern border. Armed agents forcibly separated immigrant parents from their children, some as young as 3 months old, and redesignated them as unaccompanied minors. The children were put in chain-link cages, foster homes, tent camps, and detention centers. Some of the parents were deported without their kids. Others were pressured to give up their asylum claims in exchange for getting their children back. At least one asylum-seeking father committed suicide. The administration did not keep proper records about the children it took away and, in some cases, even destroyed records that could make family reunification possible. And the worst part? This is just a trial run.



Immigration is Donald Trump's core issue: It's what got him elected in 2016 and what he hopes will get him reelected in 2020. As long as his supporters continue to respond to his words and deeds on this issue, he's not going to back down. This is why he lies about crime rates among immigrants, spouts off hateful language about "animals" and "not so innocent" children, and collapses distinctions between violent gangs and the people seeking safety from them. His intention has always been to halt brown and black migration to the United States, while encouraging newcomers from "places like Norway."

In the face of something as morally repugnant as the mass kidnapping and jailing of children, it is tempting to think that the crisis cannot last. After all, media coverage and a popular outcry forced the president to sign an executive order rescinding the policy. A federal judge ordered the government to reunite the families without delay. And NGOs and ordinary citizens organized to pay bail for some of the parents. But the fact remains that around 2,500 children still await reunification with their parents. Toddlers are being brought to immigration court without legal representation. Older kids in migrant shelters are told not to hug a sibling, not to cry, not to write a letter in their dorm rooms. If they "misbehave," they are injected with sedatives. Every day that goes by compounds their trauma.

And every day also gives the administration a new chance to adjust its policy until it becomes viable. Although he formally ended family separation, Trump was very explicit that he intends to keep the zero-tolerance policy. This means that every person who crosses the southwestern border outside of a port of entry will continue to be prosecuted, regardless of individual circumstances. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen has told refugees that they should present themselves only at designated ports of entry, but border agents at some of these ports have been turning asylum-seekers away. At the same time, Attorney General Jeff Sessions has imposed sharp new limits on who can qualify for asylum. The result is a massively punitive approach that puts thousands of migrants and refugees in immigration jails. Family separation was just one tool in this vast apparatus, and now that it has been taken off the table, the administration wants to replace it with indefinite family detention.

A proposal that seemed completely insane when Donald Trump was a candidate has now become acceptable.

We have seen this incremental strategy before with the Muslim ban. Its first version, which went into effect in January 2017, targeted seven Muslim countries and led to absolute chaos at the airports, followed by massive protests and legal challenges. So the administration modified its initial order by adding a few exceptions, such as current green-card holders, and put forward a second ban. When that second version was also challenged in court, the president signed a proclamation that barred North Korean visitors and some Venezuelan government officials from entering the country, along with nationals of Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen.

It was this final version that the Supreme Court upheld this June.

In other words, a proposal that seemed completely insane when Trump was a candidate ("a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States") has now, after enough test runs and with Trump firmly ensconced in the White House, become acceptable. All it took was the addition of a few dozen visitors from North Korea and Venezuela for the Roberts Court to rule that a policy that affects 135 million people from five Muslim countries was "facially neutral toward religion." Now that the principle has been established, Trump can add any Muslim country he wants to the list. Voilà—Muslim ban.

There is no reason to expect that indefinite family detention (i.e., immigrant internment) will be any different. The administration has already asked the Pentagon to prepare housing at military bases for 32,000 migrants, of whom 20,000 would be children. That immigrant internment is immoral is quite clear. That it is hugely costly and likely ineffectual will be revealed soon enough. But that it is even being discussed suggests a disregard for nonwhite life that is not foreign to this country's bloody history, nor even its recent past.

The question is: What will each of us, in our own limited way, do about this? Well, we need to fight on more than one front. There's a Supreme Court seat whose confirmation is not at all certain. There's the effort to flip Congress in November. There's the struggle to take back the statehouses. It's not enough to sign a check or attend a march. We have to put in the actual labor—of knocking on doors, making phone calls, and showing up for one other. If Trump wants to impose zero tolerance, we have to fight back with zero tolerance. ■

The administration has asked the Pentagon to prepare housing at military bases for 32,000 migrants, of whom 20,000 would be children.

SNAPSHOT / JOSE CABEZAS

Water Wars

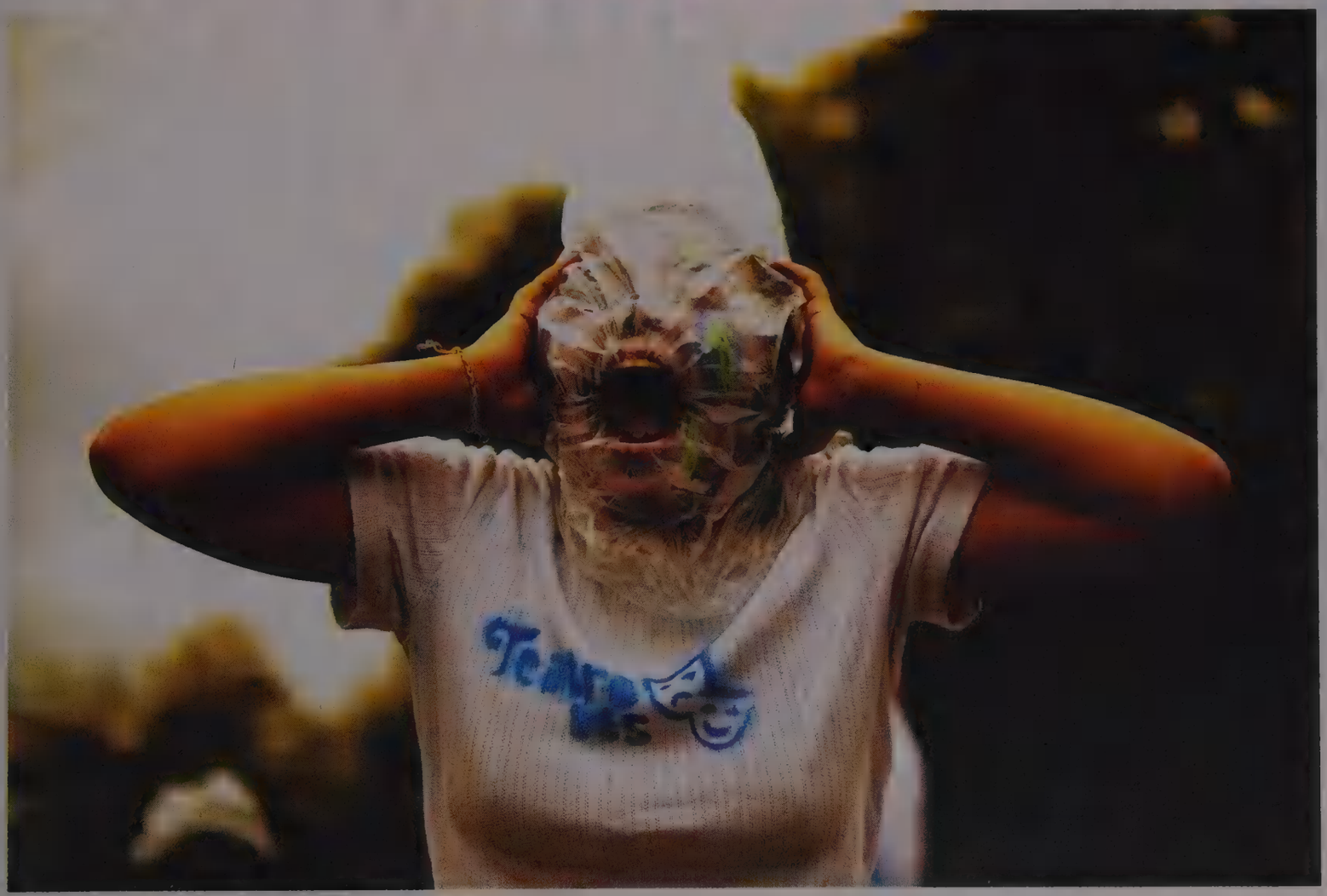
In San Salvador on July 5, a performer demonstrates against the privatization of water. In early June, conservative lawmakers in El Salvador began a push to privatize the country's scarce water resources, sparking weeks of protests.

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet

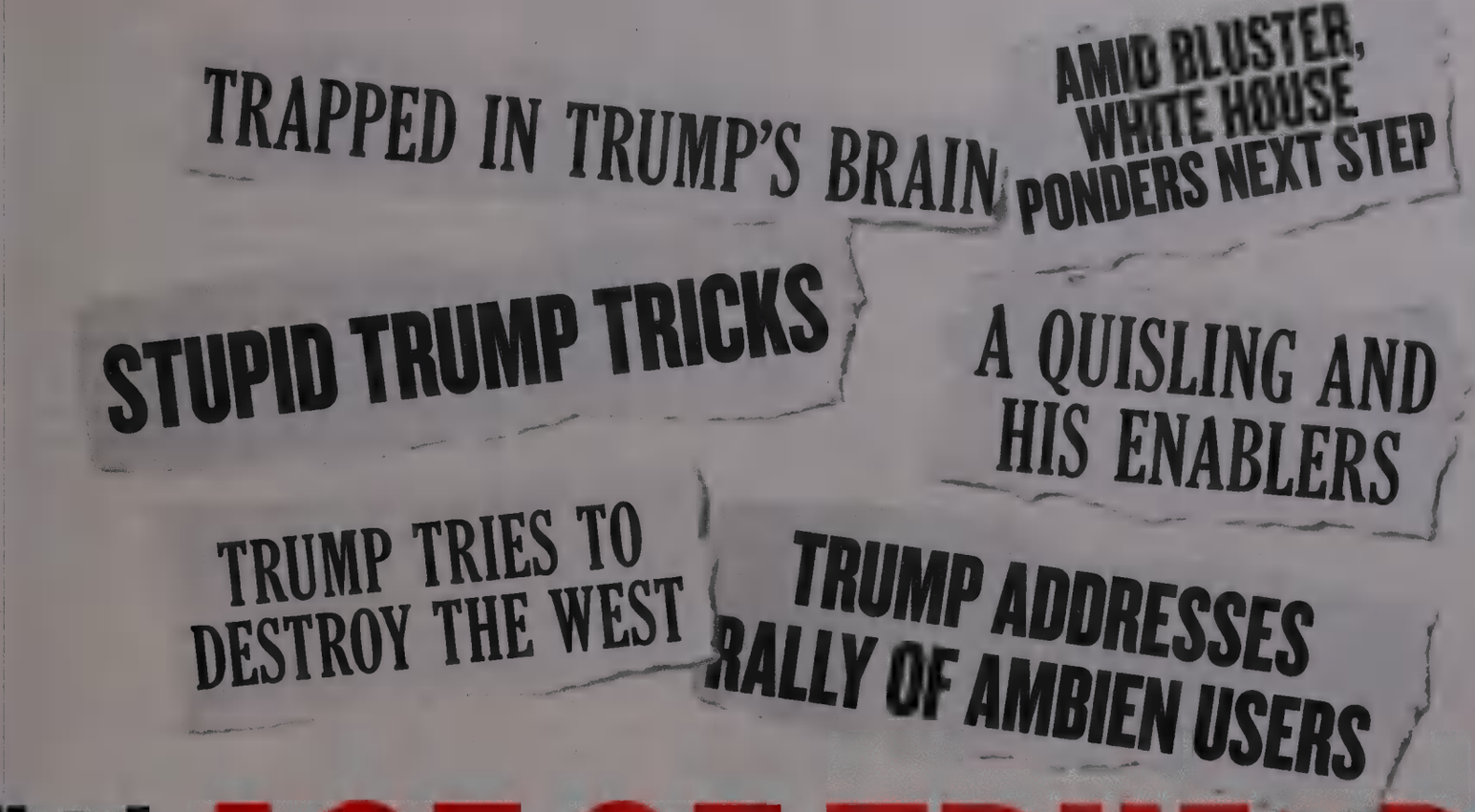
TRUMP BABY OVER LONDON

"A giant orange balloon of Mr. Trump depicted as a pouting baby in a diaper and holding a smartphone took flight in London earlier in the day."
—*The New York Times*

As pointed as the usual cartoon
Of Trump as coarse and ignorant buffoon,
This orange baby, shaped like a balloon,
Could stick as his emoji very soon.



JOURNALISM


TRAPPED IN TRUMP'S BRAIN
AMID BLUSTER, WHITE HOUSE PONDERS NEXT STEP
STUPID TRUMP TRICKS
A QUISLING AND HIS ENABLERS
TRUMP TRIES TO DESTROY THE WEST
TRUMP ADDRESSES RALLY OF AMBIEN USERS

IN THE AGE OF TRUMP

What's missing and what matters.

MICHAEL MASSING

DONALD TRUMP'S VENOMOUS ATTACKS ON the press—as an enemy of the people, purveyors of fake news, a failing institution—have taken their toll. Journalists are denounced at political rallies, trolled on social media, and subjected to racist and misogynistic taunts. Such assaults, together with the unforgiving financial climate in which they operate, have made journalists feel under siege like never before.

One result has been the development of a siege mentality. As they mobilize to defend themselves, have journalists lost their capacity for self-analysis and self-criticism? Self-acclaim more often seems the rule. National news organizations have adopted grand slogans like "Democracy dies in darkness" (*The Washington Post*) and "The truth demands our attention" (*The New York Times*). Top journalism watchdogs—the *Columbia Journalism Review*, WNYC's *On the Media*, CNN's *Reliable Sources*—rarely take on the elite press. Last year, the *Times* eliminated the position of public editor; this year, the four-part Showtime series *The Fourth Estate* lionized the paper, portraying its editors and reporters as unfailingly dedicated and idealistic and dismissing its critics as silly and self-serving.

In fact, the *Times*, the *Post*, and other top news organizations have done excellent work in documenting the outrages of the Trump administration and the damage it has done to the body politic. The exposure of Tom Price's use of private jets as secretary of health and human services; the chronicling of the regulatory rollback at the Environmental Protection Agency under the recently departed Scott Pruitt; the reports on the separation of migrant children from their parents and the other cruelties perpetrated by federal immigration authorities; the cascade of revelations about contacts and possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia; the unrelenting scrutiny of Trump's promises to "drain the swamp"—all exemplify the press's aggressive coverage of a singularly divisive, xenophobic, mendacious, and volatile president. In many ways, the press has become the main check on Trump, holding him accountable at a time when Congress is paralyzed, Republicans are cowed, and Democrats are fractured.

Yet even as news organizations perform this valuable function, they have shown some serious weaknesses, including bias, insularity, groupthink, and condescension, which have provided ammunition to Trump and his supporters as they seek to discredit the press. More important, the news media have kept their audiences poorly informed about some important realities in the country. With Trump causing ever more havoc—from initiating trade wars and instituting travel bans to interning migrants and insulting our allies—and with the fruits of the Mueller investigation beginning to appear, this might seem an inopportune time to challenge the media's performance. But unless some corrective action is taken, the same shock and dismay that coursed through newsrooms in November 2016 could occur again in 2020.

Even as news organizations hold Trump accountable, they have been guilty of bias, insularity, and groupthink.

Prior to Trump's election, the press was frequently criticized for its embrace of "he said/she said" journalism and the false sense of balance it imparted. Thankfully, this approach has been jettisoned in the Trump era, freeing journalists to forcefully call out the president's falsifications and misrepresentations. But has the balance perhaps tipped too far in the opposite direction? A news organization like the *Times* derives its reputation by delivering the news "without fear or favor," but sometimes there seems to be too much favor.

In reporting on Trump, for example, the paper often uses such tendentious words as "swagger," "brag," "boast," "tirade," "rant," and—a particular *Times* favorite—"bluster." A President Who Peddles Bluster Quietly Revives His Banter, ran a July 15, 2017, headline. Amid Bluster, White House Ponders Next Step, declared another on September 23, 2017. An article in May 2018 about Trump's speech to the graduating class of the Naval Academy was headlined: Navy Officers Saluted With Bluster and Big Numbers. According to the article itself, Trump spent much of the address touting his efforts to increase the military budget and expand the armed forces. The headline would have been more professional—and informative—had it stuck to that fact, as the online headline actually did.

But the bias runs deeper than just headlines. On June 23, the *Times* ran a story contrasting the policies of the NBA and the NFL for dealing with player protests during the national anthem. To explain the NBA's more lenient stance, the *Times* cited the greater star power of basketball players. According to the article, after the president withdrew an invitation to the champion Golden State Warriors to visit the White House because the team's record-setting point guard, Stephen Curry, said he didn't want to go, Trump "was met head on by basketball's biggest star, LeBron James, who called him a bum. Other prominent players spoke out, too. The president slinked away, the way a bully does when faced with unexpected resistance." Does such opinionizing belong in a news article?

Around the same time, the paper ran a story headlined Italy's Economy Was Humming Nicely. Then Came Trump. According to the story, the Italian economy had been seeing brisk growth until Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, putting at risk some large Italian contracts, and imposed tariffs that could make steel more expensive, further endangering growth. But the Italian economy had been stagnant for years due to political paralysis, a massive national debt, and a banking sector hobbled by bad loans; though it has finally begun to rebound, major structural problems remain. While the *Times* article did mention the paralysis, it held Trump mostly responsible, something few Italian economists would do.

No less striking than the negativity of the Trump coverage has been its volume. On June 9—the day after a press conference that Trump held before leaving for the G-7 meeting in Canada—the *Times* devoted the entire top half of its front page to the president, along with all or parts of six inside pages. On some days, *The Washington Post* has a dozen or more stories about Trump and Washington politics, compared with just one or two about the rest of the country. When White House communications director Hope Hicks resigned, the press spent days pondering the implications of this second-tier figure's departure. When Trump waited 48 hours to post a tweet criticizing the Red Hen restaurant for refusing service to press secretary Sarah Sanders, the *Times* ran a detailed analysis of what the delay said about the president's opinion of her.

Such articles reflect the "*Politico* effect." Since its launch more than 10 years ago, *Politico* has popularized a style of reporting that is (as Joe Pompeo observed in *Vanity Fair*) rapid-fire, fine-grained, gossip-filled, obsessed with who's winning, and consumed by palace intrigues. "Scoop artists" are prized above all else. Among the *Politico* reporters who have gone on to work at other top national news organizations are Maggie Haberman, Glenn Thrush, Alexander Burns, Jonathan Martin, and Ken Vogel (now at the *Times*); Josh Dawsey (now at the *Post*); Manu Raju, Dylan Byers, and Hadas Gold (CNN); Tara Palmeri (ABC); and Gregg Birnbaum (NBC). Covering Trump has brought many White House reporters fame, with speaking fees in the five figures, Twitter followers in the six figures, and regular appearances on television.

The appetite of cable-news networks for Trump experts is so great that they have signed many reporters to exclusive deals. As Steven Perlberg reported in *BuzzFeed*, "print reporters—used to workmanlike life behind the scenes…have been cast as celebrities of #TheResistance." The starting TV rate for reporters is between $30,000 and $50,000 a year; top reporters get $50,000 to $90,000; some big-name pros earn as much as $250,000. Appearing on TV magnifies these reporters' influence and access to the White House. That, in turn, enhances their ability to get inside information, which further increases their TV desirability, creating a self-feeding loop that keeps the media Trump machine whirring and humming.

Seymour Hersh—one of the nation's most celebrated investigative journalists—has expressed dismay about the workings of that machine. Speaking to *On the Media*, he cited a hypothetical *Times* reporter as an example: "I'm in *The New York Times*—I get a tip on a story…put it online for the *Times*, then go on MSNBC to talk about it.… A lot of tips and a lot of secondhand stuff is being run as serious stories, even in the good newspapers." The Trump coverage, he said, "just doesn't end.… I look at the cable news and I just think, 'Have we really come to this?'"

Russian journalists have been similarly baffled by how their country is covered in the United States. Last summer, *The New Yorker*'s Joshua Yaffa asked more than half a dozen independent Russian journalists to assess the US coverage of Putin, Russia, and possible Russian interference in the American election. All of them said they were

"bemused, frustrated, or disappointed." One complained that the US press had made Putin "look much smarter than he is, as if he operates from some master plan." In fact, this journalist added, "there is no plan—it's chaos." Over and over, the Russian journalists told Yaffa that "the U.S. media, in its reporting of the possible Russia ties of Trump associates," veered "toward trafficking in the conspiracy theories that define so much of Russian coverage of the United States." Elena Chernenko, who heads the foreign desk at *Kommersant*, tartly noted that "[t]he way the American press writes about the topic, it's like they've lost their heads."

Rush to judgment: Journalists missed the import of Trump's meeting with Kim Jong-un.

THE TONE FOR THE AMERICAN MEDIA'S coverage of Trump was set two days after the election, when *The New York Review of Books* published a piece by Masha Gessen on its website titled AUTOCRACY: RULES FOR SURVIVAL. Trump, Gessen declared, "is the first candidate in memory who ran not for president but for autocrat—and won." Her first rule—"Believe the autocrat"—has been cited repeatedly ever since.

In February 2017, Susan Glasser published a front-page piece in the *Times*' "Sunday Review" opinion section titled OUR PUTIN. "Don't worry too much about whether Trump and the Russian leader are working together," advised the subhead. "Worry about what they have in common." That same month, Timothy Snyder came out with *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons From the Twentieth Century*, a book (expanded from a Facebook post) in which he observed that "Americans today are no wiser than the Europeans who saw democracy yield to fascism." Earlier this year, Madeleine Albright expanded on that theme in *Fascism: A Warning*, while Cass Sunstein edited an essay collection titled *Can It Happen Here? Authoritarianism in America*, the general answer to which was "yes."

Andrew Sullivan, reviewing that book and another Sunstein volume (*Impeachment: A Citizen's Guide*) in the *Times Book Review*, compared Trump and his movement to Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Hungary's right-wing Fidesz party. Though Trump "is not about to initiate a coup, or suspend elections or become a dictator," his authoritarianism is likely to follow their models: "The dismemberment of a public discourse centered on objective truth is a key first step," Sullivan wrote, "fomented by unceasing dissemination of outright lies from the very top, metabolized by tribal social media, ever more extreme talk radio and what is essentially a state propaganda channel, Fox News." Next comes "the neutering of the courts," with Trump already "well on his way to (constitutionally) establishing a federal judiciary whose most important feature will be reliable assent to executive power. Congress itself has far less approval than Trump; its inability to do anything but further bankrupt the country, enrich the oligarchy and sabotage many Americans' health care leaves an aching void filled by...a president who repeatedly insists that 'I am the only one who matters.'"

"The outbreak of civil unrest in the United States is a good indication that the country is not fertile ground for fascism."
—Roger Berkowitz

Had Sullivan published something like that in Turkey, he might have been arrested. Currently, some 70 journalists are in prison there, and most independent newspapers have been closed or bullied into silence. In addition, more than 100,000 Turkish officials and civil servants have been dismissed; at least 2,200 judges and prosecutors have been jailed pending investigation; and 11,000 teachers have been suspended. The repeated characterization of Trump, by Sullivan and others in the national media, as a full-blown fascist, an autocrat, a Putin, a Mussolini, or a Hitler itself refutes those claims. So, too, do the marches in the streets, the rallies on campuses, the grassroots activism, the filing of lawsuits, the bitterly contested midterm elections, and all the other signs of a fully engaged civil society.

Roger Berkowitz, the director of the Hannah Arendt Center at Bard College, which is dedicated to promoting Arendt's legacy and ideas, became so exasperated with the facile way people have used her writings that he recently warned about the danger of "seeing fascism everywhere": The "outbreak of civil unrest in the United States," he noted, "is a good indication that the country is not fertile ground for fascism."

In offering such bloated comparisons, America's intellectual class has excused itself from the hard work of analyzing and explaining the peculiar and protean nature of Trump's populism. It's a strange mix of economic nationalism and cultural nativism, deregulatory zeal and protectionist impulses, common-man fanfare and plutocratic pomp, patriotic support for the military and isolationist antipathy to interventionism, inflammatory demagoguery, raucous rallies, unapologetic vulgarity, and racist inflections. Grappling with this stew, journalists and other members of the educated elite often seem at a loss.

IN THEIR RUSH TO DISCREDIT ALL THINGS ASSOCIATED with Trump, the media missed the potential historic significance of his summit with the North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un in Singapore. Certainly Trump's performance was open to criticism on many counts, including his failure to press Kim on his government's brutality and the lack of details about any possible denuclearization agreement. Even so, the meet-

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ing represented a step back from the brink of war and could open the way to an end of hostilities on the Korean Peninsula. It was applauded by South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who told Trump in a phone conversation that it had "laid a great foundation for peace"; by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who commended the "courage and determination" of the two leaders; and by UN Secretary General António Guterres, who called it "an important milestone in the advancement of sustainable peace and the complete and verifiable denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula."

The US press, however, was almost unanimously critical. Typical was *On the Media*'s Bob Garfield, who said that Trump had "spontaneously and unilaterally cancelled the military exercises that ensure readiness for regional security, always…conscious of the lenses and the lights and loving it all—ad libs, pronouncements, ceremonies, self-congratulation. In short, just another day covering Trump, only much farther away and at a far higher cost—all to document a moment of Trump diplomacy that would have been unnecessary if Trump himself hadn't tweeted us into nuclear confrontation with a ruthless dictator."

The derisive reference to Trump's unilateral cancellation of military exercises is especially revealing. The temporary suspension of the scheduled joint exercises in South Korea seemed not only an understandable move from a diplomatic standpoint but also a welcome break from the hair-trigger readiness on the peninsula. Yet most American journalists rushed to condemn it. In an editorial headlined No More Concessions, for instance, *The Washington Post* chastised Trump for making this "gift": "With backing from China and Russia, which seek to diminish U.S. strategic standing in Asia, North Korea has long sought an end to the exercises—and until Tuesday, this and previous U.S. administrations had flatly rejected the idea. Now, Mr. Trump has adopted it—and, remarkably, used Pyongyang's language in describing the 'war games' as 'provocative.'" The idea that Trump was adopting North Korea's language by calling the exercises "provocative" was repeated over and over by American journalists, as if directed by a central committee.

The United States maintains nearly 800 military bases and other installations in more than 70 countries and territories—more than Britain, France, and Russia combined. That so modest a step as the temporary suspension of the exercises in South Korea met such broad condemnation can at least partly be explained by the fact that Trump was its author. (Of course, the negotiations with North Korea might go nowhere—in which case the exercises could resume.)

Based mostly in New York and Washington, the nation's opinion columnists sometimes write off entire sections of the population.

No precinct of American journalism rings more loudly and monotonously with denunciations of Trump than the nation's opinion pages. At the *Times*, one can choose from among Paul Krugman (A Quisling and His Enablers), Gail Collins (Stupid Trump Tricks), Maureen Dowd (Trapped in Trump's Brain), Timothy Egan (Trump's Sellout of American Heritage), David Leonhardt (Trump Tries to Destroy the West), Frank Bruni (President Trump's Perversion of Leadership), Michelle Goldberg (The Plot Against America), and, in a class by himself, Charles Blow. Since the start of the year, Blow has devoted 36 of 42 columns to Trump, many making the same points over and over again. (Trump, Treasonous Traitor was the headline on one of his most recent.) It would be good to see these columnists go out in the field more and test their ideas on the ground. I'd like to read Blow talking with opponents of immigration, Krugman interviewing factory workers fed up with NAFTA, and Goldberg speaking with evangelicals who support Trump.

In a bid to diversify its opinion pages, *The Washington Post* has added Gary Abernathy, the editor of *The Times-Gazette* in Hillsboro, Ohio. *The Times-Gazette* was one of a handful of papers that endorsed Trump, and twice a month Abernathy offers *Post* readers a view from southern Ohio. For the most part, though, the paper's opinion pages are as monochromatic as the *Times*', with traditional conservatives like Jennifer Rubin, Michael Gerson, and George Will outdoing even the liberals in their excoriation of Trump. (*The Wall Street Journal* is just as partisan and monotonous, but in a rightward direction.)

Based mostly in New York and Washington, these columnists sometimes write off entire sections of the population. For example, in a column headlined Obama Was Right: He Came Too Early, the *Post*'s Dana Milbank declared that Trump is "leading the backlash to the Obama years and is seeking to extend white dominion as long as possible, with attempts to stem immigration, to suppress minority voting and to deter minority census participation." These "are the death throes of white hegemony. And they are ugly," Milbank continued, citing "innumerable studies and regression analyses" that showed "that the main predictor of support for Trump is racial anxiety—far more than economic anxiety." The "outcome of the struggle—fading white hegemony—is inevitable."

Attributing Trump's victory to a rear-guard effort to prolong white domination seems both one-dimensional and short-sighted. Thomas B. Edsall, writing in the *Times* in March, cited recent studies of the electorate by both the Pew Research Center and the Center for American Progress that found that white, working-class voters constituted a much larger share of the 2016 electorate than exit polls had indicated. For Democrats, Edsall observed, these studies "suggest that because the non-college white vote remains highly significant, the party and its candidates need to prevent any further erosion in this constituency that went so strongly for Trump."

Two issues were especially critical—immigration and trade. On the former, Edsall quoted William Galston of the Brookings Institution: "Denouncing citizens concerned about immigration as bigots ameliorates neither the substance nor the politics of the problem." On trade, Galston noted that nearly two-thirds of working-class whites consider trade deals harmful on the grounds that they send jobs overseas and drive down wages. Overall, he observed, non-college-educated white workers "are experiencing a pervasive sense of vulnerability."

The Washington Post
Trump scolds NATO allies on defense spending
The New York Times
Trump Confronts Allies Over Excluding Russia And Barriers to Trade
Mueller Indicts Russian To Manafort
Risks for President in Attack on the Health Law

To be competitive in the Midwest in 2020, Edsall concluded, Democrats have to do a better job of addressing this vulnerability.

Since the election, journalists have worked hard to report on these matters, but their perception has sometimes been clouded by their antipathy to the president. Even manufacturing has become suspect in the age of Trump. In March, for example, NPR featured an interview with Danielle Kurtzleben, a contributor to its website, about how Trump's policies on trade and manufacturing constituted an exercise in identity politics. Trump's "whole political persona," Kurtzleben said, "is about nostalgia, right? 'Make America Great Again.'" He's "a very backward-looking guy," harking back "to this era—the forties, the fifties, the sixties, and the seventies—when manufacturing employment was on the upswing." Looking back to those decades "isn't just about...manufacturing" but also "a time when a particular group of Americans, white Americans, and white men, were really on top."

In fact, about 30 percent of all workers in manufacturing are women, 10 percent are African Americans, and about 17 percent are Latinos. Black workers were especially hard-hit by the loss of jobs in manufacturing and in the auto industry during the 2008 recession. Under Obama, the government's efforts to rescue the auto industry and boost manufacturing received generally favorable coverage; under Trump, those efforts have sometimes been met with disdain. With Trump's erratic tariffs policy unlikely to provide relief to these beleaguered communities, there's a need for a more effective response, but the latent discomfort with blue-collar America suggested by these examples shows how journalists continue to struggle in reporting on class.

More generally, condescension toward the less educated and less cultured has become a fixture of liberal commentary and satire. During the 2016 campaign, I enjoyed reading Andy Borowitz's sly put-downs in *The New Yorker* of Trump and his supporters; however, after the election, I came to think that the joke was partly on us liberals, and that Borowitz might take an occasional poke at our cluelessness about what was happening in the rest of the country. Instead, he has continued to train his ridicule on the unwashed multitudes. A May 30 piece headlined Trump Addresses Rally of Ambien Users began as follows: "Donald J. Trump held a rally in Nashville on Tuesday night and addressed his most ardent supporters, people who take the sleep medication known as Ambien"—a reference to Roseanne Barr, who claimed she was "Ambien tweeting" when she made a racist comment about former Obama adviser Valerie Jarrett. On late-night TV, meanwhile, the nonstop jeering of Trump by Stephen Colbert, Jimmy Kimmel, Trevor Noah, Samantha Bee, John Oliver, and *Saturday Night Live* has reinforced the belief among his supporters that the media are monolithically and hopelessly arrayed against them.

Trump bump: Is a surge in digital subscribers creating an echo chamber at the paper?

"We're in a mode right now: What do the readers want? We just want to give them what they want."

—Jim Rutenberg, *New York Times* media columnist

The prevalence of such repetitive partisan fare has a simple explanation: It's good for business. Both the *Times* and the *Post* have benefited from the much-publicized "Trump bump" with a surge in digital subscribers. And with subscribers displacing advertisers as the main source of revenue for these papers, they are increasingly influential in determining what appears in them. As *Times* media columnist Jim Rutenberg observed in *The Fourth Estate*, "We're in a mode right now: What do the readers want? We just want to give them what they want."

Those who fail to do so must be prepared to face the readers' wrath, as Nicholas Kristof has periodically discovered. One of the few *Times* columnists who regularly reports from the field, Kristof in April 2017 wrote about voters in Oklahoma who continued to support Trump even after learning that he wanted to cut public programs that had helped them. The reaction among readers was venomous. "I absolutely despise these people," one woman tweeted. "Truly the worst of humanity. To hell with every one of them." Another: "ALL Trump voters are racist and deplorable. They'll never vote Democratic. We should never pander to the Trumpites, we're not a party for racists."

Such vitriol, Kristof wrote, seems "as misplaced as the support for Trump from struggling Oklahomans. I'm afraid that Trump's craziness is proving infectious, making Democrats crazy with rage that actually impedes a progressive agenda." Among the reasons that working-class Oklahomans cited for sticking with Trump: not only their opposition to abortion and support for gun rights, but also "the mockery of Democrats who deride them as ignorant bumpkins. The vilification of these voters is a gift to Trump." Nothing he had written since the election, Kristof continued, had sparked more anger from readers "than my periodic assertions that Trump voters are human, too." (Needless to say, plenty of ugly mail comes from the right as well.) While urging his readers to stand up to Trump and resist his initiatives, Kristof cautioned them to "remember that social progress means winning over voters in fly-over country, and that it's difficult to recruit voters whom you're simultaneously castigating as despicable, bigoted imbeciles." The nation's opinion writers, however, seem less interested in persuading others than in feeding the faithful.

THE MOST IRREDEEMABLE OUTPOST OF THE NATIONAL MEDIA IS CABLE news. In the past, Fox News stood out for the nakedness of its partisanship and the purity of its ideology; now, both MSNBC and CNN are mirror versions of it, tailoring their programming to the demands of their Trump-loathing audiences. With their noxious talking heads, irritating breaking-news flashes, nonstop commercials (20 or more minutes out of every 60 on CNN), performative White House correspondents, paucity of reporting, and constant drumbeat of *Trump, Trump, Trump, Trump*, watching these networks is a demoralizing and soul-sapping experience.

The one cable show I try to watch regularly is MSNBC's *Morning Joe*—because it's both livelier than most programs and more revealing of the current state of the news media. On most days, there's at least some discussion of books and ideas; the usual pundits are joined by historians, diplomats, economists, and the occasional philosopher. Unfortunately, the cast is drawn from a very narrow sliver of society. In addition to hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski and Washington anchor Willie Geist, the regulars include Steven Rattner, a Wall Street investor (and former *Times* journalist); Richard Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations; political commentator Mike Barnicle; the *Post*'s David Ignatius and Eugene Robinson; the *Times*' Nicholas Confessore; the historian and journalist Jon Meacham; and the historian Michael Beschloss. They are mostly older white men residing in the Amtrak corridor.

The establishment: *Morning Joe*'s guests are mostly older white men residing in the Amtrak corridor.

The conversation is no less uniform. To get a sense of the thinking of the Eastern establishment, this is the place to go. Over weeks of viewing, I heard Michael McFaul, the former ambassador to Russia, declare that Putin's actions are even worse than those of his predecessors in the Soviet Union's final decades; Madeleine Albright warn that we're on the road to fascism; Confessore attribute Trump's support to anxiety over America's disappearing white majority; White House reporter Peter Alexander remark that, "for this president, words don't really mean much"; and Beschloss say that while Richard Nixon lied occasionally, the lying today in Washington is constant. (In fact, Nixon lied about his role in scuttling the 1968 peace talks with North Vietnam, his knowledge of the Watergate break-in, his payment of hush money to cover up that crime, the secret bombing of Cambodia, the CIA's efforts to destabilize the government of Salvador Allende, and much, much more.) On the show, there are constant references to World War II, America's role in liberating Europe, our unwavering commitment to democracy and freedom, and our longtime willingness to serve as the protector of the postwar global order.

That order, however, is undergoing a major transformation. With China, Russia, India, and the European Union emerging as new power centers, American influence is steadily declining. As Parag Khanna, a public-policy scholar in Singapore, observed in a January 2018 piece in *Politico*: "Trump, like Obama before him, is really just an accessory to what has been happening for at least the past quarter century: the rise of a truly multipolar world." The global system "is underpinned by more powerful forces than either the whims of America's president or even the country's enormous military and economic weight." Due to its unique geography and political history, Khanna continued, the United States "is probably the most self-absorbed country on the planet—and it's been hard for American leaders to adjust to a world in which the U.S. is one star in the constellation and not the North Star of the entire sky."

Watching *Morning Joe*, I'm struck by how little curiosity its panelists show about changes taking place outside the studio.

The same is true for the American press. Trump's rise is part of an international right-wing populist wave that needs to be not only decried and condemned but also dissected and understood; resistance must be rooted in wisdom. Watching *Morning Joe*, I'm struck by how little curiosity its panelists show about the changes taking place outside the studio. There's little recognition of the tremendous harm inflicted by the 2008 financial crisis, or of the many millions around the world who continue to feel disserved and displaced by the global capitalist system. And given the show's proximity to the epicenter of that system, it's no surprise that it rarely acknowledges Wall Street's role in producing the disruptive forces that helped propel Trump to victory.

Our national newspapers have been similarly remiss. Journalists, while energetically exposing the venality, greed, and shady dealings of figures like Michael Cohen, Paul Manafort, Jared Kushner, and Ivanka Trump, have paid little attention to the activities of financial titans like BlackRock's Laurence Fink, Elliott Management's Paul Singer, Citadel's Kenneth Griffin, Third Point's Daniel Loeb, and Tudor Investment's Paul Tudor Jones. While diligently revealing the money-grubbing practices of the Trump Organization, the press has been mostly silent about the operations of Blackstone, the Carlyle Group, Apollo Management, and other private-equity firms whose mergers, acquisitions, and "restructurings" have contributed to so many factory closings, layoffs, and outsourcings. Goldman Sachs, which was widely reviled as a "vampire squid" after the financial crisis, has regained its status as a respected member of the financial community, with the *Times* running personality-centered accounts of the competition to replace CEO Lloyd Blankfein. (THE NEXT GOLDMAN CHIEF COULD BE A BANKER WHO MOONLIGHTS AS A D.J., announced the headline over one article.) While journalists have creditably covered the efforts by Republicans to weaken the Dodd-Frank Act, they rarely discuss how the country's big banks operate and whether they actually benefit the US economy.

In the end, Trump is both the product and the servant of an entrenched system—one that news organizations generally shrink from challenging. Why is that? Because writing about the way things really work would endanger journalists' access to sources? Because it would provoke an outcry from powerful people? Because it wouldn't produce enough traffic? Or is it a result of the "Trump effect"? The preoccupation with the president has pushed aside many urgent stories, not the least of which are the economic and political realities that propelled his rise and that, if not fully covered and addressed, could prolong his stay in office. ■

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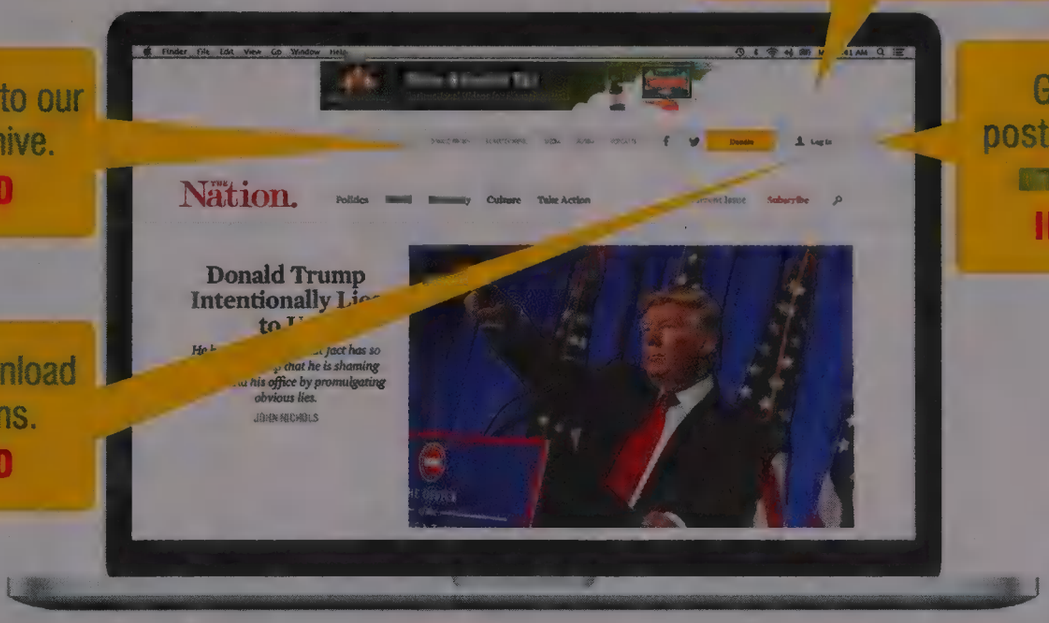

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A GREEN NEW DEAL IN THE EVERGREEN STATE

Initiative 1631 tackles both climate change and economic inequality.

by SASHA ABRAMSKY

In early May, dozens of environmental, labor, and tribal leaders in Washington State, as well as representatives from organizations working on the economic and political needs of communities of color—about 60 of which have coalesced into a group called Front and Centered—gathered in Seattle's Wing Luke Museum, in the heart of the city's old International District, for a reception highlighting the Protect Washington Act. Enjoying chicken skewers, egg rolls, grilled mushrooms, lemongrass tofu, and locally produced Steak House wines, the attendees were in a celebratory mood.

The various participants, who came together in an Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy, had spent more than a year hashing out the language of the act, otherwise known as Initiative 1631, a hugely ambitious attempt to tackle both climate change and economic inequity in Washington.

Supported by an economic analysis from a team led by Robert Pollin, of the University of Massachusetts–based Political Economy Research Institute, they crafted a ballot measure that would commit the state to massive reductions in CO_2 emissions: 20 million tons per year, which, by 2035, would be 40 percent lower than they were in 2014. The plan would impose a carbon-emissions fee on big polluters—and it would use the resulting billions of dollars in revenue for a rolling series of investments in clean energy and water. The money would be directed to employers with a high-wage, labor-protection model, to be spent on the economic, environmental, and health-care revitalization of communities on the front lines of global warming; on low-income energy-assistance programs; and on both job retraining and wage and benefit protections for workers in fossil-fuel-reliant industries as those industries are phased out over the span of a generation.

> "This is about a model of hope. It's really about community-based solutions."
> —Tom Geiger, UFCW

The coalition members then hit the streets, easily gathering the 260,000 signatures they needed by early July to qualify the measure for the November ballot.

Their pitch was simple: With money raised from the $15 per-ton fee on CO_2 emissions (starting in 2020 and scaling up thereafter), the initiative would create "glide paths" to full retirement for fossil-fuel-industry workers within five years of retiring. For those who had worked in these industries between one and five years, it would provide a year of guaranteed income, health care, and retirement contributions for every year the employee had worked. For those who had worked in the industry for more than five years, it would cover them with a wage-insurance program for up to five years, making up whatever income difference there might be between their old wages in the fossil-fuel industry and their new ones in non-fossil-fuel sectors. All of this, the measure's architects stressed, would be funded through the carbon-emissions fee.

"We don't usually have much say in how economic policy is developed," observes Lynne Dodson, secretary treasurer of the Washington State Labor Council. "This has communities of color, environmental groups, and labor making decisions about the economy of the future. It defines what it means to have a just transition—it doesn't just mean a couple years of training."

Tom Geiger, a longtime activist and communications director of the United Food and Commercial Workers, agrees. "It's about being good for most people or bad for most people," he argues. "The current reality is bad for most people. This is about a model of hope. But the process by which you get to the details is more important. It's really about community-based solutions."

All told, Initiative 1631 represents what some supporters have termed a "Green New Deal," a policy of economic and racial justice that posits, as its baseline, the need for environmental protections, while committing the state to a more equitable set of economic priorities across the board. If it passes, it will unleash a "virtuous cycle of equity," in the words

Sasha Abramsky's latest book is Jumping at Shadows: The Triumph of Fear and the End of the American Dream.

ILLUSTRATION BY CURT MERLO

of Dujie Tahat, communications director for Front and Centered. Its proponents believe that such a measure is worlds better than I-732, a 2016 initiative crafted by a small group of economists frustrated by the federal stalemate on the issue, which proposed a carbon-emissions fee but provided minimal social-equity investments at the back end. Major groups in both the labor and the environmental movements withheld their support for I-732, which went on to a crushing defeat.

In addition to being a more carefully crafted measure than the 2016 initiative, I-1631 is coming at a more opportune moment for progressive change in the blue states of America's left coast. The new initiative is certainly in keeping with the spirit of the times: In the wake of President Trump's withdrawal from the Paris climate accord and his administration's full-blown assault on environmental standards, West Coast citizens—already burdened by the costs of ever more terrifying forest fires, endangered fisheries, and rapidly rising sea levels—are up in arms about the need to protect the places where they live. The Quinault Indian Nation, for example, on Washington's Olympic Peninsula coast, has already begun to see its ancient burial grounds and sacred sites inundated, and parts of its ancestral homeland around the coastal villages of Taholah and Queets are becoming uninhabitable.

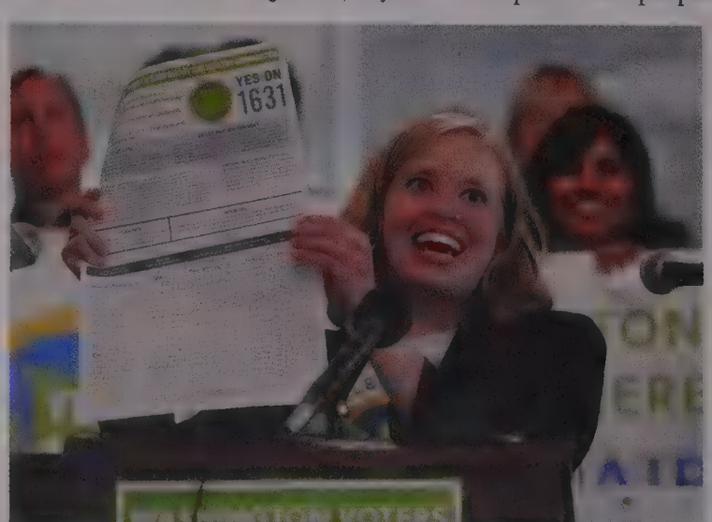
"The Quinault are the most climate-exposed people in the Northwest," says the tribe's climate-change adviser, Matthew Randazzo V. Realizing that vulnerability, President Fawn Sharp, a constitutional attorney by training, committed her tribe in 2016 to the campaign for a comprehensive, statewide climate-justice policy. Over the past two years, she's been instrumental in recruiting tribal nations from across the state in the push for I-1631. "If it passes," says Leonard Forsman, the elected chairman of the Suquamish tribe, "we will have more resources and money available for projects to improve habitat and create more resilience in our environment."

Aiko Schaefer, director of Front and Centered, notes that the burdens of climate change are disproportionately borne by the poor and people of color. For these communities, she says, "it's very much about health and the quality of the air." Kim Powe, of Puget Sound Sage, a racial-justice-focused activist group based in Seattle, agrees. The environment offers an overarching theme, she says, "but I don't talk about the work as an environmentalist. It's an intersectional approach; we're not just talking about saving the birds and polar bears and those awesome trees."

That sort of framing has pushed more traditional environmental groups, like the Washington Environmental Council, to rethink how they conceive the issue as well. Speaking in her 14th-floor office, its windows looking out toward the legendary Pike Place Market and the waters of Elliott Bay, the council's president, Becky Kelley, ponders the broader politics of the moment. The nastiness of national politics, she has concluded, is making people "hungrier" for across-the-board change at the local level, since it is "so clearly not going to be delivered from above." At the same time, it has made groups like hers realize that the scale of the problem is "too big to tackle alone. We cannot reach our goals without each other."

"It's an intersectional approach; we're not just talking about saving the birds and polar bears and those awesome trees."

—Kim Powe, Puget Sound Sage



Abigail Doerr, campaign director for Yes on 1631, holds up an initiative petition with signatures, May 10.

Buoyed by internal polling results suggesting that the initiative had a good chance of success, and by an influx of funding from progressive donors, the "Yes on 1631" activists felt they could surpass even California, with its cap-and-trade system and ambitious emissions-reduction targets, and put in place the country's most all-encompassing environmental-justice and social-equity initiative. The campaign rented an unused chiropractic office in Seattle's hip, young University District before gathering signatures throughout the late spring and early summer. From this somewhat down-at-the-heels headquarters, a huge, mainly volunteer-driven campaign was launched—and eventually stretched to all corners of the state.

It was soon clear that this was a serious fight for systemic reform, with the petroleum lobby gearing up for an all-out attempt to stop the initiative. As the signature-collection effort was taking off, five leading companies—part of the Western States Petroleum Association—pledged to donate $250,000 to the "No on 1631" campaign.

"There's not a real plan for how they're going to spend the money [raised by the carbon-emissions fee]," the campaign's spokesman, Mark Funk, says of the initiative. "It doesn't do anything to improve Washington's tax structure. We will have a broad group of businesses, associations, and citizens who will be involved in the No campaign. We will raise issues about what it may do for jobs and the economy in general. Our working assumption is that it can be beaten."

To understand why I-1631 has a decent chance of success, despite the millions of dollars that the Western States Petroleum Association and conservative PACs will almost certainly throw into the fight, one needs to leave Seattle and drive north a couple of hours to a little farming community called Sumas, in lush, wild Whatcom County, perched just south of the Canadian border.

Whatcom is remote, its economy divided between agriculture inland and oil refining on the coast. The farming sector, in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains, is one of the world's great berry-growing regions. In the spring, it is ablaze with flowers, every front porch a riot of pinks and purples and delicate sky-blues. It is also, historically, temperate. In recent years, however, as global warming has intensified, the region has been plagued by wildfires.

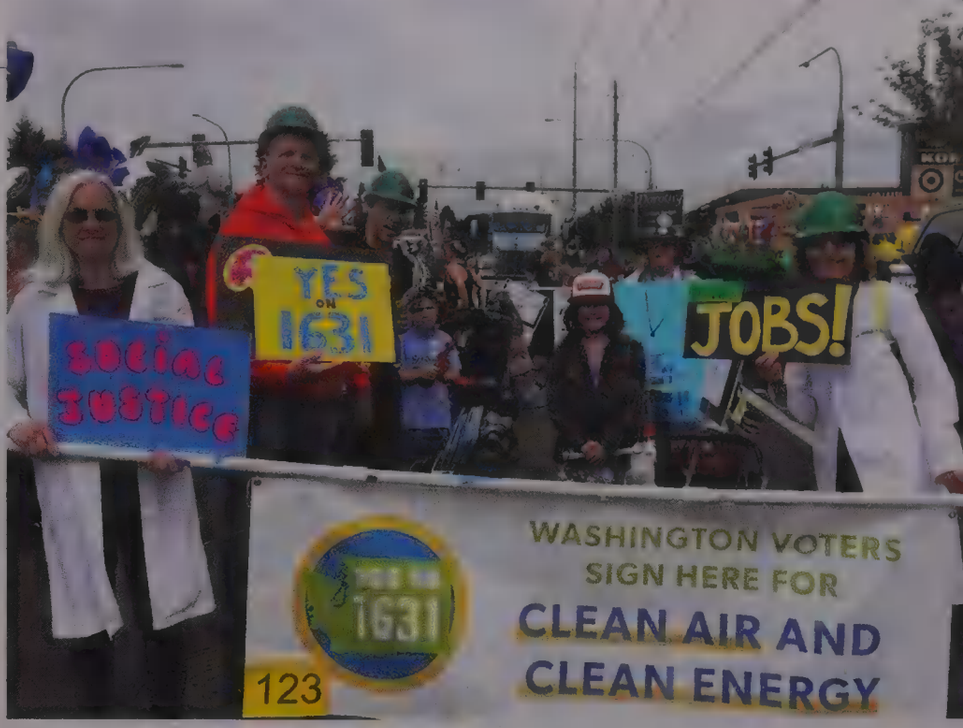
Last summer, in the midst of a weeks-long heat-and-smog haze created by vast forest fires just north of the Canadian border, Honesto Silva Ibarra, a 28-year-old diabetic migrant laborer from Mexico who was working on the Sarbanand blueberry farm, collapsed on the job. When the farm administrators didn't immediately take him to a hospital, his coworkers bundled him into a pri-

vate vehicle and sped him to a clinic. There, he was found to be suffering from extreme dehydration—brought on, in all likelihood, by a combination of the abnormal heat and the long hours without adequate water and food breaks that he and his co-workers were enduring. Ibarra was sent on to a Seattle hospital, but died shortly thereafter. He was the father of two young children,

Ibarra's death, which spurred a wildcat strike and left lingering bitterness in the local community, was, according to farmworker organizers like Community to Community's 67-year-old Rosalinda Guillen, directly attributable to global warming. Guillen is a tiny woman who grew up working in strawberry, broccoli, and cabbage fields, moved into jobs with local banks, and became a full-time farmworker organizer in 1986. "It was pretty scary," she recalls of the fires. "The headlines in the papers were 'Be careful. If you have health problems, stay indoors.' We can see on a daily basis the changing climate, because we're working on the land all the time."

That message has been resonating: Whatcom County is now second only to King County, which includes the Seattle metropolitan area, in the number of signatures that I-1631's volunteers gathered. Many residents there were fed up with the labor conditions that Big Agriculture was imposing, and they were appalled by the increased dangers that workers—both those from the United States and those imported on short-term visas from other countries—faced as the environment degraded. That combination of growing labor and environmental consciousness was creating powerful currents for change.

In Community to Community's colorful third-floor suite of offices in the pretty downtown area of Bellingham, the walls bedecked with immigrant-rights posters, political pins, and paintings of farmworkers, Guillen discusses the issue. Tackling climate change, she says, is inherently about fair economics. "This is what I take to the table when I'm at Front and Centered: the dignity, within our own culture, of being farmworkers. For the first time, we're going to be part of a policy that will lead us into a future where we'll be included in an equitable manner."



Yes on 1631 supporters at a rally in Vancouver, Washington, May 19.

"This is what I take to the table: the dignity, within our own culture, of being farmworkers."

—Rosalinda Guillen, Community to Community

Just south of Whatcom, in Skagit County, lives Steve Garey, who headed the United Steelworkers local in the little town of Mount Vernon until he retired a few years back. Garey recalls how he spent most of his career working as a machinist for the county's two refineries, one run by Shell, the other by Tesoro (now Andeavor). The refineries are still there—two awesome edifices, great temples of industrialism erected on Fidalgo Island, near the northern edge of Puget Sound's Swinomish Channel—and they still employ many workers, providing an important tax base. Surrounded by chain-link fences topped with barbed wire, the refineries look out onto preternaturally beautiful waters, where great blue herons wade in the shallows. Ships that dock in the deep waters off the northern edge of the peninsula distribute the finished products from these refineries, which serve much of the northwestern quadrant of the country.

Garey is, on the surface, an unlikely supporter of I-1631. A big, burly man, his ginger hair and mustache only slightly dulled by age, he looks every bit the blue-collar worker—which, in the Northwest, used to mean he would likely be engaged in a war of priorities with the environmental movement. After all, a generation ago, labor unions and environmentalists were at bitter odds during the struggle over saving the spotted owl, and throughout the decline of the logging industry. What was good for the one was, more often than not, seen as necessarily bad for the other. In the forests of the Pacific Northwest, as the communities that depended on the timber industry were withering, an animosity festered that has taken decades to heal.

Tyson Johnston, Quinault Indian Nation vice president, speaking in support of Yes on 1631.

These days, however, there's a vibrant blue-green partnership in Washington State, and Garey is one of its leading proponents. "If you're in Texas or Louisiana, this issue doesn't have political legs," he argues, sitting in his union hall, the walls of which are covered with photographs of members who, over the decades, have died in refinery accidents. "But in this state, it does. And 1631 not only provides a backup for communities in Skagit and Whatcom counties; it allows us to consider the creation of tens of thousands of new jobs with very high labor standards written into the terms of investment."

If this big package of reforms passes, it will join—and, as its supporters argue, actually surpass—California's SB 350 and SB 32 in setting a national template for fair and equitable environmental progress. It will, if successful, further cement a West Coast counternarrative to the antienvironmentalism and cruel, race-to-the-bottom antilabor policies of the Trump administration.

Garey is realistic enough to know that, as November approaches, the petroleum industry and other fossil-fuel lobbies will throw everything they can against I-1631. They'll tell workers that it will cost them their jobs, and they'll tell impoverished communities that it will hinder economic growth.

Yet this retired refinery worker also believes there's something different about this moment. "This policy is about old people planting shade trees for their grandkids," Garey says. "This is going to be classic 'organized people versus organized money.' It's not just 'us and them' anymore—it's 'us and us and us and us and them' now, and it's made all the difference in the world." ■

The Fruits of Their Labour

Under Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour Party has promised a radically transformed economy. Is a new **survival socialism** the solution?

by LAURA FLANDERS

DISASTER CAPITALISM: PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD OF IT. You've certainly lived with it. Well described by author and activist Naomi Klein, it's the scenario in which big banks and corporate businesses profit off crises like earthquakes, bankruptcies, and war, taking advantage of people and places in trouble to enact policies that allow them to amass more power and wealth.

What's gotten far less press, at least until now, is what I'm calling "survival socialism": the plethora of alternatives that emerge as people under pressure conjure solutions to their own troubles in ways that aim to deliver not profit as much as social value—better services, cheaper prices, more social cohesion, a greater ownership share in production, a more vibrant democracy, a healthier environment.

Across the world, such practices and policies vary, from land trusts and community gardens to local-first contracting and public takeovers of private utilities. The Transnational Institute, a progressive Amsterdam-based think tank, reports that more than 800 cities in 42 countries have recently taken over crucial utilities: water in Grenoble, France; energy in Boulder, Colorado; community health clinics in Delhi, India. Big cities and small towns are doing it, but some of the most exciting efforts are happening in some of the most obscure places, where the need and the neglect have been the greatest.

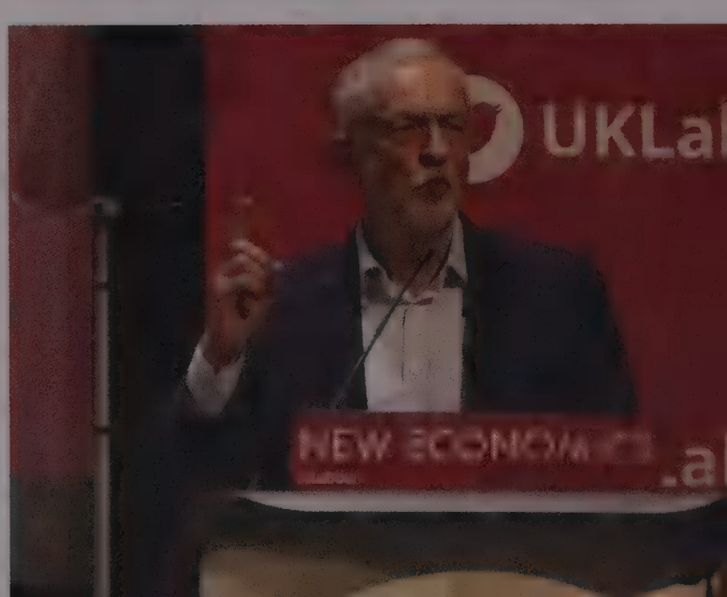
Until now, most of these experiments have been small-scale and local, bubbling up from the grass roots in solitary bursts, with little coordination and few high-profile champions. But some of them might soon go mainstream, if a pair of Labour Party politicians—themselves fairly obscure until recently—form the next government in the United Kingdom. While the ruling prime minister, Theresa May, has until May 2022 to call an election, the recent series of high-level resignations from her Conservative-led government could well hasten its collapse.

Whether that day comes sooner or later, the Labour Party has been preparing. On May 19, Jeremy Corbyn, the party's leader, and John McDonnell, shadow chancellor of the Exchequer and Labour's top economic minister, welcomed attendees to this year's State of the Economy Conference at Imperial College in London. The gathering—part of a series that began in 2016—took place just a few weeks after local elections in which the Labour Party had held steady, picking up a few new members while losing others. Weathered parliamentarians and newly elected councillors mingled with popular alt-economists, Occupy Wall Street graduates, and even Selma James, the 89-year-old guru of the Wages for Housework movement.

The purpose of the conference was to solidify Labour's vision for a "new economy"—and, just as crucially, strategies to deliver it. People crammed into workshops on the minutiae of public banking and how to renationalize the railroads and heard from party leaders as well as a few big-name journalists and public intellectuals. But more than any celebrity speaker, the hit of the day seemed to be the sense of inclusion itself. "It's important that elected representatives lead these," explained McDonnell, a hawkeyed 66-year-old whose energy seems ready to burst out of his button-down shirt. "But it's important also that those elected representatives listen to people."

Grassroots activists rarely rub shoulders with party leaders. It almost never happens in the United States; top

"You have to have a democracy in process at a local level as well as a national level, and within your party and within your movement."
—Jeremy Corbyn



Corbynomics: Jeremy Corbyn delivers remarks at the State of the Economy Conference.

LEFT: DYLAN PETROHILOS FOR THE NEXT SYSTEM PROJECT; RIGHT: *THE LAURA FLANDERS SHOW*

Laura Flanders, a contributing writer to The Nation, *is a best-selling author and host of* The Laura Flanders Show.

Democrats might address party events, but they don't listen in on workshops. Corbyn and McDonnell did. White-haired and slope-shouldered, Corbyn agreed to every selfie that was asked of him and, corny as it sounds, seemed to mean it when he said in an interview: "You have to have a democracy in process at a local level as well as a national level, and within your party and within your movement.... What John McDonnell and I often say is, 'It's not when *I* win an election—it's when *we* win the election.' It's about the empowering of people."

It's a heady experience for an expat who observed the Labour Party drift right until 2015, when Corbyn, an outspoken anti-war socialist, won the leadership. Labour is now the largest political party in Western Europe, boasting some 552,000 members. Its government-in-waiting is packed with men and women in their 30s or even younger, mostly outsiders to party politics until Labour brought them inside. Still, Corbyn cynics are a dime a dozen: "Not I but we" is just campaign talk, they say; all this participatory process, this "new economics," is just window dressing on the old, discredited, top-down state socialism of the past century.

One thing's for sure: Corbyn and McDonnell know they owe their improbable rise and Labour's historic gains in the last general election to their promise of a radically transformed economy and society. Labour's 2017 platform included nationalizing the railways, the Royal Mail, energy, and water; increased taxes on those earning more than £80,000 a year; bringing more assets into public hands; and investing in worker-owned businesses, fee-free education, and a privately funded national investment bank as well as regional banks to fund development.

Until Labour has big national power, however, those promises are only as good as the (very popular) manifesto they were written in. That's why Labour's gains at the local level are important. As McDonnell is quick to point out: "We're not in government, but we are in control in certain local councils. If we can effect change at the local community level sufficiently, that will enable us to build up to a change at the national level."

"If we can effect change at the local community level sufficiently, that will enable us to build up to a change at the national level."

—John McDonnell, shadow chancellor of the Exchequer

MATTHEW BROWN IS A COUNCILLOR IN Preston, a small city in Lancashire County, and one of the men Corbyn and McDonnell are excited about. Brown's star has been rising since he became synonymous with the "Preston model," a set of policies and practices designed to build and keep wealth in the community by emphasizing local investment and procurement.

Brown's a Corbyn fan. He's also a Preston man. His city of just over 140,000 people traces its history back to the seventh century. In the 1760s, Richard Arkwright invented the spinning frame in Preston and helped jump-start the Industrial Revolution. Textiles were big there—so much so that Karl Marx, who visited to report on local unrest, once hailed Preston as "Our St. Petersburg"—followed by engineering. But deindustrialization in the last half-century hit the city hard. By 2010, Preston was scoring near the top of the national charts for suicide, and near the bottom for employment and well-being. Under the UK's austerity policies, aid from Westminster shrank, even as the lines of people queuing up for unemployment, disability, and income supports grew. Brown knows this firsthand because, for 19 years, he worked in the local benefit office.

"It felt as if we'd been left behind. The economy wasn't being run for us; it was being run for someone else, and people like us seemed to have no place in it," he recalls.

Brown is tall and bald, mid-40s, but, even now, you can imagine him as a boy, smart and obsessive, taking radios apart to study their workings and reassemble them better. What he's been tinkering with since he was elected to the Preston City Council in 2002, at age 30, is the machinery of city government. In 2011, after a 12-year plan to create jobs fell apart when a powerful name-brand retailer pulled out of what was to have been a shiny new shopping center, Brown reached out to Ted Howard of the Democracy Collaborative, an American "think-and-do tank" that he'd been reading about online. The collaborative helped start the Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland.

The model that the Democracy Collaborative developed in Cleveland links worker-owned, for-profit businesses, or cooperatives, to the supply chains of several large local "anchor institutions." The cooperatives supply goods and services to these institutions while siting their businesses in, and hiring workers from, the lowest-income, most disinvested neighborhoods. The first company under this model, a "green" laundry with eight employees, opened its doors in 2009. This May, Evergreen announced that it had secured the contract for all the laundry services for the Cleveland Clinic, one of the premier health systems in the country. "It's really an opportunity to create equity and inclusion for very marginalized neighborhoods in the city," Howard says.

It was also, it seemed to Brown, a way for Preston to retake control of its own economy. Soon he, Howard, and Neil McInroy of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, in Manchester, were studying where Preston's money was going. Of the £750 million spent annually on procurement and contracting by the city's top six institutional spenders, only 5 percent went to businesses in Preston. Ninety-five percent was leaking out, much of it to firms in the more prosperous south of England.

To stanch the bleeding, Brown et al. did not at first attempt to create cooperatives from scratch. Instead, they approached six institutions that received public funds—including the City Council, a university, and the county constabulary—and cut deals to alter their procurement practices in favor of supporting local suppliers and "social value." These six organizations spent £38 million in Preston and £292 million in all of Lancashire in 2013. By 2017, these sums had jumped to £111 million and £486

Building locally: Artist rendering of the recently opened Preston Market Hall.

million, respectively.

In the meantime, the City Council has set to work nurturing groups like the Co-operative Development Network, which brings together members of existing and prospective cooperatives to provide mutual support and advice. And Brown's doing what he can to get co-ops for food and information technology off the ground next.

Where wealth still leaks out, the City Council looks to fill the gaps—in part by redirecting the pension fund to invest locally. On a short walk around City Hall, Brown points to a block of affordable housing built with the help of the pension fund, as well as to a covered market, which used a locally owned construction firm that employs local contractors. New student accommodations have also gone up.

These efforts appear to be paying off. In 2012, Preston became the first living-wage employer in northern England—and in 2016, it was rated the best city in northwest England in which to live and work. This May, voters signaled their approval by expanding Labour's majority in Preston; Brown was selected to serve as council leader.

Behind the "Preston model": Matthew Brown, Preston City Council leader.

DOES THE LABOUR PARTY SEE ITS ST. Petersburg in Preston? It's certainly keen on spreading the word about the Preston model. Earlier this year, the party began a Community Wealth Building Unit, intended to share ideas among people working on similar initiatives, while also connecting local councillors with technical assistance. Brown, McInroy, and Howard are all part of the effort. McDonnell came to Preston to announce the launch, declaring that "this kind of radicalism is exactly what we need across the whole country." Corbyn hailed Brown from the stage of Imperial College in May, saying: "Thank you, Matthew, for all you do."

The fact is, Corbyn and McDonnell need people like Brown, and places like Preston, for political as well as practical reasons. Labour has no heavyweight socialist equivalent of Milton Friedman and his "Chicago boys," none of the well-funded think tanks that cooked up neoliberalism. It depends on local politics to get more voters engaged and to preserve their enthusiasm for democracy—and for Labour—until the next national election. It needs to transform the economy and society, because that's what Labour promised. It's also what most people agree this moment requires.

Unless the turmoil among the Tories forces the nation to change course, Britain after Brexit will have a lot to learn from Preston after austerity. With less than a year to go before the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, more than one in five UK manufacturers say they expect to lay off workers, according to an industry study. The country is going to have to do more with what it has and rely less on begging or bribing global corporations to pay fair taxes or a living wage. It will also have to grapple with the hit that London's financial center is about to take—a hit that, while painful, isn't necessarily a bad thing. You don't have to be a student of Thomas Piketty or Joseph Stiglitz to know that the outsize influence of speculative financial institutions has damaged Britain's cohesion far more than the government could repair. Taxation and redistribution must be part of any solution, but they alone can't fix a 1 percent economy.

Survival socialism, as in the Preston model, is a way of regenerating a locality, helping it recover from the assaults of the past.

Survival socialism, as in the Preston model, is a way of regenerating a locality, helping it recover from the assaults of the past. "Socialism is fundamentally important," McInroy says, "because if you don't have that plural ownership of wealth and means of production, we're absolutely condemning millions of people to low wages [and] poor conditions in perpetuity."

Yet the Preston model is also just a starting point. While Labour supports cooperatives as the best option in the private sector, its priority is to put more production back into public hands at the regional as well as the national level. "Put [government funds] back into the bottom of the system," McDonnell explains, "because that's where real changes all come from."

Conscious of those who say this is just a throwback, Labour seems determined to learn from the past. The 20th century's nationalized industries were more effective than people give them credit for, but they were also easy for Thatcherites to vilify because they were distant from the average consumer, and workers were excluded from key decision-making. "The BBC is the classic example: [It's] supposed to be a public-TV corporation, but [the] public has virtually no say," notes Andrew Cumbers, the author of *Reclaiming Public Ownership: Making Space for Economic Democracy*, and co-author of a 47-page pamphlet that McDonnell commissioned last year on "Alternative Models of Ownership."

"When Labour ministers established publicly owned companies in the 1940s, they didn't want citizen engagement—they were afraid of syndicalism," Cumbers adds. The Labour Party of the time was also very Fabian, which is to say, very confident that "experts" knew what to do.

"Jeremy's a break with that," says Hilary Wainwright, a longtime feminist scholar and activist who's known both Corbyn and McDonnell for decades. "[He represents] a new politics as well as a new economics."

There are challenges. At present, the local decision-making authority is very weak, and there remain critical questions about "community": Who's in it? Local first-ism can slip into xenophobia if every community is not included; as it is, Britain's ethnic minorities tend to be overpoliced and underserved by local government. Moreover, medical and educational anchor institutions are often the prime gentrifiers of poor neighborhoods. In Preston, most of the residents I spoke to had yet to hear of the Preston model. Clearly, some relationships have yet to be addressed.

There remains an ideological question as well. Taken to a national scale, local-first purchasing looks a lot like protectionism. More important, does survival socialism—the bottom-up, self-help sort—let the state off the hook for seeing to people's basic needs? Recent experiments under the Conservative government to devolve health-care spending to local authorities have resulted in more competition from the private sector, not a strengthening of the National Health Service.

The British Parliament is about to enter its long summer recess. If the Conservatives come out of it as divided as they went in, Labour could be grappling with all of this sooner rather than later. In the meantime, Brown will keep tinkering. His next ambition is to start a locally owned Bank of Lancashire to stop capital leaking to the shareholders of London and Wall Street. ■

Letters

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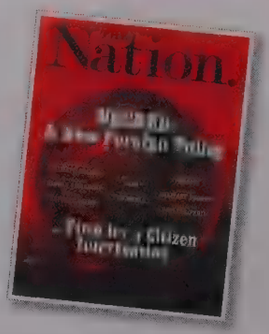

Reader Interventions

Re *The Nation*'s July 16/23 special issue, "Needed: A New Foreign Policy": Truer words were never written. But there's a puzzling aspect here as well. The one issue that has mobilized Americans politically today—immigration reform—appears only as a minor point. The growing inequality among nations, which is the ultimate cause of the immigration problem, is presented as an aspect of economic growth, or as a blot on our humanitarian values, and it's both. But shouldn't it be front and center? Only international measures can deal with it; Trump is so strikingly oblivious to its causes.

PETER MARCUSE
SANTA BARBARA, CALIF.

Thank you for the valuable insights in your special foreign-policy issue. As someone who has worked alongside a few of the authors to press community and labor organizations to oppose the war in Iraq and the bloated, counterproductive US military budget, I have long been worried by our movement's relative lack of attention to global workers' issues.

Your authors wisely talk about the rise in inequality and its relationship to militarism, both at home and abroad. The growing resistance movement needs to understand these issues or we'll continue to lose big portions of our base, such as people in marginal economic situations, to tantalizing demagogic, xenophobic, and racist appeals. One hundred years ago, labor was key to the broad opposition to World War I. We need those connections again.

JEFF BLUM
NEW YORK CITY

Even in *The Nation*'s special foreign-policy issue, there is no mention of Palestine. How disheartening! US tax dollars fund Israel's destruction of lives, dreams, the economy, the environment, and beauty in Palestine. How can you justify such a glaring omission? Yes, Robert Borosage mentions Trump's move of the US embassy to Jerusalem, but he does not mention that this move is against international law. There needs to be context as well as urgency in supporting Palestine.

ELIZABETH SMITH
KANSAS CITY, MO.

Giant Steps

In "Wars Without End" [July 16/23], Andrew Bacevich concludes his fine critique of American militarism by asking where we can turn for guidance when it comes to transforming the war economy and producing a better life for all. By way of a partial answer, he reminds us of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1967 speech decrying "the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism." Then Bacevich asks who will bring Trump voters into "the fold" to join the battle against these triplets.

Let me suggest the renewed Poor People's Campaign as one possible candidate. The effort has begun with organizing in 40 states, with an emphasis on the poor and the working class, and has added the struggle against "ecological devastation" to King's triplets in its "national call for moral revival."

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UP FROM RAWLS

Charles Mills's effort to save liberal political philosophy from itself

by CHRISTOPHER LEBRON

Charles Mills's *Black Rights/White Wrongs* represents the culmination of more than two decades of work on the philosophy of race and social justice. Mills received his PhD from the University of Toronto in 1985, working with the left-wing philosophers Frank Cunningham and Daniel Goldstick on the concept of ideology in Marx and Engels. In the following years, liberal political philosophy would be strongly challenged. A growing number of feminists argued that liberal normative theorists were engaged in a form of selective historical imagination, erasing everyone but white males from the story of political society's origins.

Already fluent in Marxist thought and politics, Mills was strongly influenced by these arguments, particularly as they were delivered in Carole Pateman's *The Sexual Contract*; and in his first book, *The Racial Contract*, Mills initiated a searing critique of modern liberal theory. Despite its progressive intonations, he argued, the tradition had consistently obscured the history of racism and white supremacy in liberal societies, thereby turning a blind eye to racial inequal-

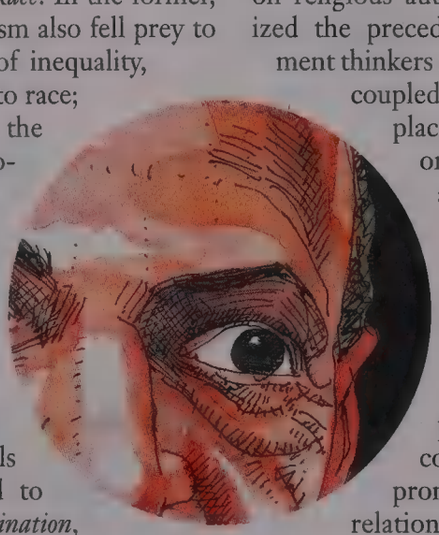
Black Rights/White Wrongs
The Critique of Racial Liberalism
By Charles W. Mills
Oxford University. 304 pp. $29.95

Christopher Lebron is associate professor of philosophy at Johns Hopkins and the author of The Making of Black Lives Matter *and* The Color of Our Shame.

ILLUSTRATION BY **JOE CIARDIELLO**

ity while embracing Enlightenment values without qualification.

Mills followed *The Racial Contract* with two collections that continued this critique: *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* and *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*. In the former, he examined how Marxism also fell prey to masking certain forms of inequality, especially when it came to race; in the latter, he explored the often overlooked sociological assumptions in liberal moral and political philosophy that resulted in the erasure of black people and their political history and experiences during colonialism and postcolonialism. In 2007, Mills and Pateman partnered to write *Contract and Domination*, a condensed discussion of the main arguments in their critiques of liberal normative theory. But dedicated readers of Mills's corpus also noticed that he was in the process of rethinking his own criticisms. His essays suggested a pivot toward a systemic theory of his own that would give readers a picture of liberalism's ills and a way to remedy them.



Black Rights/White Wrongs, Mills's latest book, is that long-awaited result: his most thorough account yet of why and how liberal political theory has gone wrong. He returns to his criticism that liberal theory has mainly been attentive to and representative of the sociohistorical demands of white people (men in particular), but he also argues for a refreshed liberalism that retains its core political commitments while offering a fuller reckoning with the racial hierarchies and inequalities of America's past and present. His argument is best understood as progressing in two phases. The first finds Mills placing liberal theory's history alongside that of race and empire in the West; the second confronts John Rawls's foundational work, *A Theory of Justice*, as well as the social-contract tradition that he helped to revive.

Mills's first line of criticism indicts the core tradition of liberal theory for persistently sidelining the moral and political questions around race and empire. Since the time of the ancient Greeks, when Socrates wandered the streets of Athens peppering young and old with questions about the nature of justice, political philosophy has been guided by an overarching preoccupation: What is the good society, and what is the role of the citizen in helping both to realize and sustain it? The Enlightenment, Mills continues, developed new ideas to answer these questions. Denouncing the reliance on religious authority that had characterized the preceding centuries, Enlightenment thinkers insisted that human agency, coupled with knowledge, could replace divine revelation as the orienting principle of social and personal change. Thus arose the modern conception of liberty, which depended on free will and human rationality. All that was needed now was an attendant form of political organization that could embody, secure, and promote these ideas and their relations to each other: something that we have come to call "liberal democracy." Kant, an adherent of Enlightenment thinking and the modern era's reigning moral theorist, brought the tools of moral philosophy to the aid of democratic theory by emphasizing the notion that every individual was to be treated as an end in themselves, and never as the means to someone else's ends. This was a perfect ethical complement to the mantra of "one man, one vote" that came to characterize Western democracy.

Thinkers working in the modern tradition came to embrace the Enlightenment ideals of personal agency and sovereignty as checks on government power. Yet, as Mills observes, at the same time that Europe was offering its white male inhabitants liberalism as a way to make good on the ideal of equality among persons, those same newly enlightened nations were in a furious race around the globe to colonize and dominate nonwhite peoples in faraway lands in an effort to establish economic and military might. The triumphant narrative of Western modernity occluded the barbarity of rape, murder, pillage, and the exploitation of millions of persons of African descent as well as Native Americans in the service of a vision of liberal progress. What the writer James Baldwin once called the "bloody catalogue of oppression" effectively subsidized white freedom and the ability to think about white property rights, legislative design, and free markets. And all of this happened in a liberal society because racism, for Mills, is "a normative system in its own right that makes whiteness a prerequisite for full personhood and generally...limits nonwhites to 'subperson' status."

The problem, according to Mills, is that the very foundations of liberalism's moral and political theory "would all then have to be rethought in the light of this category's existence," because liberal philosophers had provided cover for much of this brutal history. This was true in the 17th and 18th centuries, when Locke could be found offering advice on what Carolina colony ought to do with its black population (spoiler alert: It wasn't giving them the vote) and Kant could be found saying, "The Negro can be disciplined and cultivated, but is never genuinely civilized. He falls of his own accord into savagery." And it was true in the 20th century as well: Even in an era in which Ella Baker, Thurgood Marshall, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Martin Luther King Jr. urged white and black Americans alike to come to grips with the fact of racial violence and domination in American democracy, few liberal philosophers did.

In a volume of political thought edited by Richard Brandt with the straightforward title *Social Justice* (1962), for example, not one author felt compelled to remark on racial injustice as a motivating example for their theory. Even after passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts, Rawls failed to note in his writings that in the middle of the 20th century, the defining case of social injustice had to do with race, and *A Theory of Justice*, his canonical 1971 text in liberal political theory, also failed to deal with race in any meaningful way.

Mills's first point concludes with the following proposition: that one source for this blindness to race comes from the fact that so many people writing about liberalism were untouched by the bloody catalogue of oppression. So it is not very surprising to learn that Rawls, as well as every contributor to Brandt's book, was a white man. And while women have made notable (though not satisfactory) gains in attaining faculty positions, philosophy traditionally has been and remains today the domain of white people. As Mills notes, for the past 20 years the number of black professors teaching philosophy in the United States has held at a measly and tragic 1 percent.

Mills's second argument follows very much from his first: that liberal political philosophy's aloofness to the history and everyday experience of race leads it to ignore the importance of sociology to moral and political thought. Rawls's major innovation

in *A Theory of Justice* was to remove ethics from the context of particular social circumstance. He did so by pairing two ideas, the "original position" and the "veil of ignorance." Here's how they work: Imagine you want to design a perfectly just society, and your main concern is that it be done fairly. Rawls's idea was that people's judgment is so compromised by the bias of self-interest that the most reliable way to make people reason fairly about the role of society in promoting justice is to place them in a bargaining situation in which they deliberate in complete ignorance of both their own social position and the particulars of their society's history.

This is, of course, a theoretical tool, so it bears mentioning that what it really amounts to is Rawls working out the final principles of justice from his own original position. And most of the principles that Rawls came up with are pretty fair: They stipulate equal basic rights, equality of opportunity in accessing society's resources, and a welfare provision that justifies those forms of inequality that benefit the least advantaged. Mills finds none of these objectionable. Rather, he argues that where Rawls goes wrong is in the proposition that one can work out the ideal society first and then address the society we actually have.

Mills's position here is a natural outgrowth of his first line of attack. If a discipline already prone to abstraction is grounded in a view of modern society that denies the centrality of centuries of human bondage and exploitation to its prosperity, then a theoretical framework that essentially promises to circle back to this problem will effectively treat it as anomalous or tangential rather than as fundamental. To sustain this view of society, Mills notes, it has been necessary to "retroactively [edit] out of national (and Western) memory" experiences of violence and racism because they contradict "the overarching contract myth that the impartial state was consensually created by reciprocally respecting rights-bearing persons." This results in moral and political theories that purport to tell us how to live well without any sense of how distinctly atrocious the lives of marginalized subpopulations have long been.

Mills isn't suggesting that Rawls or any other philosopher is intentionally looking to keep black well-being on the sidelines when discussing his or her theory of justice. Rather, by ignoring race as a fundamental case of injustice, these thinkers are more emblematic of how American liberalism operates in general. For Mills, white supremacy isn't only the Richard Spencers of the world, gleefully marching through Southern towns with tiki torches. It is also a state of mind common among white Americans—liberals included—that allows one to refuse to reckon with his or her relationship to black suffering, whether on the streets, in the boardrooms, or in philosophy books.

Taking apart flimsy arguments is a prized and common rite in the field of philosophy, and readers coming to *Black Rights/White Wrongs*—especially nonspecialists—will want to know how they should think about race and social justice in a positive sense after grappling with Mills's indictments of how we often think about the two. At the end of the book, Mills signals that he plans to write a sequel that will offer a more complete picture of what he thinks should follow from his critical project. However, he does conclude *Black Rights/White Wrongs* with a short section that may surprise some of his readers. In it, he argues for a conception that he terms "black radical liberalism."

Despite all of the problems that beset them, Mills wants to retain the best parts of both liberalism and liberal philosophy, as they provide "the most developed body of normative theory for understanding the rights of persons." Coupled with a perspective that makes the black diasporic experience central to its thinking, this body of rights can, Mills asserts, produce a politics radical in its distribution of social and political power as well as in its redistribution of economic power. And while these would be welcome amendments to liberal theory, the most radical aspect of Mills's argument is its standpoint: seeing society as fundamentally rooted in white supremacy rather than as a basically fair system with some relatively minor cases of disadvantage that still need to be addressed. This new standpoint, Mills insists, will open up moral and political theory for the future as well, since it won't be closed off to the actual experiences of marginalized and oppressed groups in a society.

People reading *Black Rights/White Wrongs* might worry, given our current moment, whether Mills's work offers too little, too late. The rise of Donald Trump and the alt-right has been disturbing for any number of reasons, but let me highlight just one. For decades, the political right has depended on dog whistles to code its appeals to racial resentment. For example, the so-called War on Drugs has really been an assault on people of color, even

Fashion's Cycle

after Rana Plaza

To be born is to risk
the ghost

of a factory collapse

to try it on in intervals
in front of the mirror.

I loved the baby doll
dress like

no other. I can see it.
I can see a hand

reaching out to her
brother, as if to say:

we will make it
out of here.

I wore it, I wore it
out the

door.

ROSA ALCALA

as whites have casually used illicit narcotics with comparatively little in the way of legal consequences. Black Americans have always found it telling that their neighborhoods are a site for this "war," even though they have no policing power over the nation's borders, and so they reliably retort: How did the drugs get to the hood in the first place? By and large, however, most people have agreed to this coded language, with both the left and the right winking and nodding through this and other policy discourses. But Trump and the alt-right contingent of his followers have made this winking and nodding explicit. Trump has also continually appointed known racists to high-level positions—Jeff Sessions, Steve Bannon, Sebastian Gorka—and publicly condoned white-supremacist violence by, for example, claiming that even the neo-Nazi demonstrators at the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia—which ended in multiple people being hurt and one woman, Heather Heyer, being killed—included among their number some "fine people."

In this way, what Mills has long warned lurks beneath the surface has now boiled to the top. The left and the right have traditionally understood these dog whistles as being necessary to maintain the idea that America is a liberal society, and it is partly on account of this implicit concession that, for all our woes, black people have made progress, though nowhere near enough to describe America as just. But Trump and his cadre have forced the right to plainly own its racism and are instituting a government that challenges the very idea of a liberal society.

Appropriately, Mills's book has appeared at a moment when liberal democracy's violent and racist tendencies have been unmasked. But I would argue that his work resonates in many other ways as well. I like to think of Mills as our black Socrates, roaming the philosophical streets, asking people why they think a society like ours, stained by a history of racial horrors, is not more ashamed of itself, and why its leading minds do not make that shame a motivating force in the struggle for a more just society. And maybe, alas, Mills's prophecies are like all prophecies—ignored until the future forces us to acknowledge them, finally positioning us to see the truth they contained all along. This is why we need Charles Mills: His effort to demand a reckoning with liberalism's weaknesses and limitations is also an effort to save liberalism, and that is a struggle to save ourselves as well. ■

Eight Slateku

The brown paper bag
Is almost the greatest invention in the world
The brown paper bag with handles
Is
*

Alexander Graham Bell
Thank you thank you thank you
Where would we be without you
As our big bad villain
*

Attention Deficit Disorder
Plowing dust with my finger
Feeling what we are
Flicking it away
*

Hollywood
Smoothly wraps
Hollywood
Soothingly warps
*

I love the creak
Of my cane bending
And the twang
Straight back
*

A spat
Always starts out with a kiss
And ends with a high five
Aren't we lucky
*

Nature
Does this rock count
How about the sun smiling
In my hair
*

Prehistory
The French army wanted to talk
In the dark
Without making a sound

JOHN LEE CLARK

The Bunch's first romance.... his name was Al.
A Dance at Valley Stream central High.
MORE GIRLS THAN BOYS
OH GAWD, OH GAWD HE'S LOOKING AT ME OH I HOPE I LOOK SEXY!
THAT FAT E ON THE END LOOKS REAL EAGER. I'LL GIVE 'ER THE "EYE."
HEY, WHAT'S YA NAME?
UM, UH, OH, A MY FRIENDS CALL ME BUNCH.
WELL, YA WANNA CUT OUTA HERE WITH ME OR NOT?
OH HE'S MEAN
OH YES, UH HUM SURE I'D LIKE TO GO OUT WITH YOU WHAT'D YOU SAY YOUR NAME WAS?
GULP
OK GIRLS THIS DANCE IS A LADIES CHOICE!!
GOOD THINKIN' BEAUTIEM!
WELL SOK, SOMEONE'S GOTTA BREAK THE ICE WANNA DANCE?
YEA SURE JEAN! HOW YA DOIN'?
WELL HOW DO I LOOK?
DO YOU LOOK REAL GOOD?
TUANT?
YEA SURE
C'MON JOEL YOU HAFTA DANCE WITH ME NOW!
NEXT DANCE BOYS ASK GIRLS...
WANNA DANCE JAN?
NOT REALLY BUT ALRITE
UM, UH MAY I DANCE WITH YOU PLEASE?
UH HUH
OH THANK YOU!
IT'S OK
HI, I DON'T KNOW YOUR NAME BUT WRAP YA LIKE TA' DANCE!
I'M THE BUNCH.
I'M SOK
THIS WAS BEFORE THE BUNCH GOT PUMPKIN AN' FAT.
THIS IS THE BUNCH'S FIRST TIME "GETTING THE MAN." SHE IS ECSTATIC AN' SHE NEVER CAN FORGET THIS FEELING!!!

THE RAW MATERIALS OF LIFE

Aline Kominsky-Crumb's radical honesty

by JILLIAN STEINHAUER

In April 2013, Claire Messud published *The Woman Upstairs*, a novel about an angry schoolteacher named Nora. In the lead-up to the book's release, *Publishers Weekly* ran an interview with Messud, in which the interviewer asked her, rather offhandedly, "I wouldn't want to be friends with Nora, would you? Her outlook is almost unbearably grim." Messud responded with appropriate wrath: "For heaven's sake, what kind of question is that? Would you want to be friends with Humbert Humbert? Would you want to be friends with Mickey Sabbath? Saleem Sinai? Hamlet?" She continued listing characters before noting, "If you're reading to find friends, you're in deep trouble. We read to find life, in all its possibilities. The relevant question isn't 'is this a potential friend for me?' but 'is this character alive?'"

The exchange set off a miniature earthquake on the Internet. Writers weighed in on all sides: *The New Yorker*'s "Page Turner" blog convened a "forum on 'likability'"; Jennifer Weiner went to bat for likable female characters in *Slate*; months later, Roxane Gay published an essay about the value of unlikable female protagonists in *BuzzFeed*. The debate dismantled the double standard that women should be pleasant and agreeable, even when they're fictional creations. Despite being outdated, the idea was clearly still present—an old wound whose scab was due to be picked once more.

It was maddening, but also comical, to watch the argument rage on, as if the work of some of the best female creators wasn't a ready-made rebuttal to this myth. Aline

Love That Bunch
By Aline Kominsky-Crumb
Drawn & Quarterly. 232 pp. $29.95

Jillian Steinhauer writes about art and politics and is a former senior editor of Hyperallergic.

Kominsky-Crumb, for one, has devoted her career to breaking down the expectation of women's propriety, often with humor. In 1972, she contributed a story, "Goldie: A Neurotic Woman," to the inaugural issue of the groundbreaking underground magazine *Wimmen's Comix*. Her first published work, "Goldie" is these days considered the first autobiographical comic created by a woman. The five-page piece is a sort of dreamlike narration of how Goldie—a stand-in for the author, who draws herself with a big nose and even bigger hips—rediscovers her pride after puberty and an extended period of sleeping around have ruined her self-esteem. It's a tale that Kominsky-Crumb would go on to retell many times in her work.

"A lot of women in the feminist art collective found me + my story distasteful!" Kominsky-Crumb recounts in a more recent comic titled "My Very Own Dream House." Below that caption, a plain-faced woman wearing a flower necklace chides her: "Why are you so down on yourself? You should have a more positive self-image." Kominsky-Crumb, who draws herself here wearing lipstick and with pronounced eyelashes, answers: "Sorree! I just don't see myself in heroic terms.." The woman adds: "An' you shouldn't show yur legs.... They're yuge!!"

Kominsky-Crumb has never exhibited much decorum in her work. From that very first comic, she's made a point of showing what others don't want to see, especially from a woman who makes art about herself: sexuality, insecurity, pettiness, anger, and bodily functions. Soon after the publication of "Goldie," Kominsky-Crumb renamed her comics alter ego "the Bunch." A story from 1975, "Bunch Plays With Herself," is a quiet, expressionistic two-page ode to the wonders of the body. In it, the Bunch pops a pimple, picks her butt and nose, masturbates, then sunbathes and burns.

Such openness hasn't garnered the artist a huge following. (It doesn't help that her husband of 40 years, Robert Crumb, is one of the world's most famous cartoonists.) Over the past couple of decades, however, a cultural shift has taken place, which seems to have opened up more space for her: Autobiographical comics have become mainstream, and, as others have noted, TV shows that feature complicated and "difficult" female characters, like *Girls* and *Broad City*, have come along. Still, somehow we aren't yet past arguing about likability. And so Drawn & Quarterly's recent publication of an anthology of Kominsky-Crumb's comics, titled *Love That Bunch*, is both a belated acknowledgment and perfectly timed.

Love That Bunch opens with an episode that reads, by modern standards, like date rape. A teenage Kominsky-Crumb, her hair perfectly coiffed in waves, gets picked out at a high-school dance by a boy named Al. "A little while later," according to the comic (which was first published in 1976), Al drives her to the middle of nowhere and has sex with her in his car while she says "don't put it in!" and "no," repeatedly. The black-and-white drawings of the scene are simple but striking, with thick, jagged lines in panels that explicitly show Al's penis entering her vagina. Background patterns of dashes and dots seem to remove the pair from the car and drop them into an abstract psychosexual space. After it's over, we see our heroine at home, admitting to her best friend Carol that she "went all the way." She doesn't cry; instead, a panel shows her recalling the image of Al's penis with a slight smile on her face.

How could she treat this trauma so lightly? Where were the tears and anger? In a recent interview in *The New Republic*, Kominsky-Crumb explained that her actual relationship with Al lasted longer than a single night: He dated her for a year in the hopes of having sex with her, and once it happened, he broke up with her. Although Kominsky-Crumb called it "the most painful thing that I ever experienced emotionally," adding that "my heart was broken," she doesn't see the incident as rape.

This is useful background, but it's also, in a way, not important. The Al episode signals something surprising, given its content: Sex and relationships with men are not the central trauma of Kominsky-Crumb's life—as we quickly learn, her parents are. It sets us up for a book full of complexities and apparent contradictions. Kominsky-Crumb finds validation through attention from men, but she is also a feminist. She has a husband as well as boyfriends. She went to art school but decided to make comics. She's a devoted hippie who, later in life, gets plastic surgery. She moves to France but still talks like she lives on Long Island, where she grew up—in comics, she renders her husband's name as "Rohbit." Many of her comics stem from her seemingly endless reserve of self-loathing, yet she has ego enough to make them in the first place.

The Al story also captures Kominsky-Crumb's ability, at her best, to treat trauma with restraint. This is unexpected for a book that's visually loud: She crams her mostly black-and-white panels with crosshatching, shading, patterns, and text, sometimes to the point that the reader's eye doesn't know where to go. She's also loud in her complaints and self-hatred. "Of What Use Is a Bunch?" (1980) lists 13 of her worst qualities. The panel accompanying No. 11—"She forces her personal neuroses on you... her readers"—shows the Bunch at work on a comic about her parents, which looks like one that appeared 30 pages earlier. She faces the reader and says, in three different speech balloons, "I can't get along with my mother"; "I feel bedder tho after expressing it in my story!"; "I'm like Woody Allen + he's a big star!!" A second caption tucked in at the bottom right asks: "Is this aht??"

This particular panel is a brilliant bit of self-conscious social satire that gives the lie to the comic in which it appears. On the surface, it seems like Kominsky-Crumb is simply making fun of herself for pouring out her feelings on the page. She is, but she's also calling out a culture that lets Woody Allen do so with impunity while giving her grief. (Would you want to be friends with Isaac Mortimer Davis?) What's more, she's adopting humor and a naive posture—"playing dumb" is a tactic that women learn early—as a way of heading off a critique that's been constantly directed at her over the years: that she can't draw (the first of the 13 items in this very comic). Is this art? The insecurity behind the question may be real, but the answer is obvious.

The strongest pieces in *Love That Bunch* are the longer ones, which move through a series of episodes to tell a larger story. These showcase Kominsky-Crumb's incredible ability to distill the tragedy and humor of life down to brief but meaningful moments. For example, "More of the Bunch" (1976) narrates, in nine pages, the Bunch's transition from a bored, unhealthily thin housewife in Tucson, Arizona, into a newly single art-school student seduced by her professor, and finally into a woman who, sitting down to make a comic, stumbles upon an unexpected medium for her self-expression. An expanded version of this story appears in

"My Very Own Dream House" (2000/14), the longest (at 32 pages) and one of the most complex pieces in the book, and offers an account of Kominsky-Crumb's life by way of the houses she's inhabited. "A house is the physical manifestation of the ego....." reads the title panel. Parts of that narrative also appear in the 17-page "Blabette 'n' Arnie" (1976), which chronicles her parents' relationship—"Blabette" is her name for her mother—and ends with her father's premature death.

In these comics, Kominsky-Crumb constantly reworks the raw material of her life. Despite the repetition, the episodes feel fresh each time because of the way she emphasizes different details. "More of the Bunch" reads like a cautionary tale about the dangers of men; "My Very Own Dream House" is a meditation on how our physical environments shape us; "Blabette 'n' Arnie" is a treatise on the pitfalls of turning to materialism to mask one's unhappiness. Each time Kominsky-Crumb retells her stories, she refashions them as well. And their compilation in a single volume feels like a confirmation of Joan Didion's maxim that "We tell ourselves stories in order to live."

Many of the comics in *Love That Bunch* contain significant events: separation, finding one's calling, the birth of a sibling, the death of a parent, meeting a husband, having a baby, moving to another country. Yet their treatment is never overwrought, even though the people who experience them often are: Blabette and Arnie fight loudly, and the Bunch inherits her parents' flair for drama (as well as for using coercive, male-dominated sex as ▪ way to end fights). While everyone's busy yelling, however, life quietly happens, almost in the background. The Bunch's father dies on the last page of "Blabette 'n' Arnie" in the span of a single panel, ▪ swiftness that seems to reflect the real circumstances. At the end, in ▪ rare sympathetic portrayal, the 39-year-old Blabette is left alone at ▪ desk with a bright void behind her.

If her comics are any indication, the most contentious relationship in Kominsky-Crumb's life has been the one with her mother. Blabette gets the cruelest treatment in the book: In one drawing, which takes up half a page in "The Bunch, Her Baby, and Grammaw Blabette" (1982) and is blown up even larger to accompany the table of contents, the Bunch's mother appears as ▪ hybrid of an Expressionist woodcut and the villain Ursula from *The Little Mermaid*. Her face is shaped like an hourglass, with eyelashes that look like worms and ▪ gaping void of a mouth, inside of which triangles take the place of teeth, while her tongue evokes a mountain. In big, bold letters, Blabette yells, as if on cue, "SO RELAX.. DON'T GET UPSET.. DON'T GET NERVOUS!"

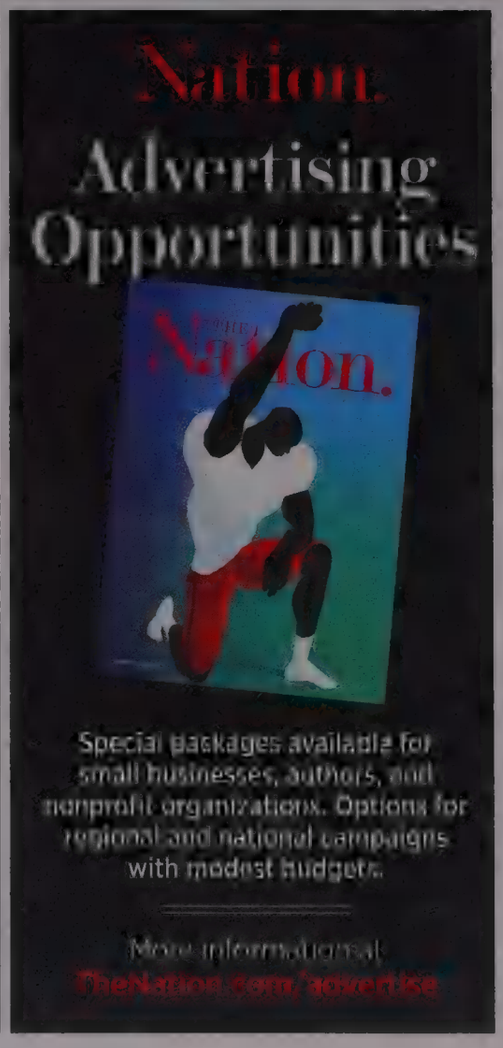
There were, admittedly, moments when I became tired of Kominsky-Crumb's anger with her mother—after all, most of us have mom issues—much as, about two-thirds of the way through, her own self-hatred started to wear me down. (*Love That Bunch* is probably best read in sections, one comic at a time, rather than plowing straight through.) But then something happened: In "Mommie Dearest Bunch," the Bunch's mouth grows large and her teeth turn into triangles while she's yelling at her own daughter. She becomes her mother. And in the panels that immediately follow, she flashes back to an episode from her childhood, writing: "Now I realize my mother was frustrated, bored, compulsive + angry..." What starts as many a woman's nightmare (at least for me and Kominsky-Crumb) is transformed into a moment of sympathy.

This is the kind of hard-won insight that makes *Love That Bunch* so invaluable. The book paints ▪ 50-year portrait of a woman who has necessarily evolved and grown and gotten to know herself better. How often does any cultural creation offer such breadth? How many of us are willing (or able) to be so publicly honest about our past and present selves?

I think the medium of comics is partly to thank here, for lending itself so easily to serialization. But it's to Kominsky-Crumb's credit that she had the foresight, along with several of her more successful peers, to make them autobiographical, and to keep making them even when she didn't have a big readership. As she revisits the same stories over and over again in the book, you get the feeling that you're watching her do on the page what we all do in one way or another: create a mythology of the self.

That self is always multifold—in Kominsky-Crumb's case, there's the insecure teenager, the hairy hippie, the exhausted mother, the sex-crazed housewife, the doting grandmother. There's Mr. Bunch, ▪ man who lives inside the Bunch and is ▪ cross between the patriarchy, her ego, and her biting, caustic edge. (In one of the book's more deliciously grotesque panels, Mr. Bunch gets cum in his eyes when the Bunch has sex.) Kominsky-Crumb is well aware that the many parts of her self don't always get along: A terrific panel from "Up in the Air" (1980) shows numerous Bunches in profile, yelling insults at each other. The central speech balloon confides: "I can't stand myselves!"

This is a model of personhood that women aren't allowed often enough: messy, contradictory, and highly imperfect. After all, buried in that seemingly unthreatening (if antiquated) idea of likability is the expectation that women should be comprehensible and thus manageable. *Love That Bunch* demonstrates how dangerous this is: The Bunch's attempts to force herself to fit conventional standards threaten her health. It's her introspection—which at times veers into self-absorption—that saves her, by giving her a kind of freedom to do what she wants and needs. That freedom, paired with a radical honesty, is the book's greatest takeaway. The specifics of the Bunch's story and personality matter far less than her way of being alive. ■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HEALING POWERS

Kamasi Washington's art

by MARCUS J. MOORE

In 2015, saxophonist Kamasi Washington introduced himself to the world in a bold way: He released a triple album of jazz, long after the genre had ceased to be popular in the mainstream marketplace. Prior to *The Epic*—Washington's massive debut, a blend of big band, gospel, and 1970s funk stretched over a whopping 174 minutes—he had appeared on lyricist Kendrick Lamar's avant-rap opus *To Pimp a Butterfly* (2015), playing tenor saxophone on the song "u" and arranging strings throughout the LP. With its searing assessments of police brutality and racial injustice, *Butterfly* became one of the biggest records of recent years, catapulting Lamar and his collaborators—a collective that included Washington, pianist Robert Glasper, bassist Stephen "Thundercat" Bruner, and producer Terrace Martin—to even greater recognition. Washington's music harks back to spiritual-jazz purveyors like Sun Ra, Albert Ayler, Pharoah Sanders, and John Coltrane, whose music sought peace for humankind and explored deeper states of consciousness. For Washington and his cohort, music has healing powers; the notes from their instruments are meant to summon the gods to whom they pray.

But before Washington became the trendiest musician in jazz, he and his friends toiled away in a tiny garage at his parents' home in Inglewood, California, that they affectionately dubbed "the Shack." There, Washington and the West Coast Get Down—an immensely talented collective featuring bassists Bruner and Miles Mosley, trombonist Ryan Porter, drummer Tony Austin, and pianist Cameron Graves—worked to create their own instrumental-music hybrid, fusing the big bounce of Los Angeles hip-hop with the

Marcus J. Moore is a senior editor at Bandcamp.

silky improv of 1970s jazz-funk. Drawing on the likes of Dr. Dre, Weather Report, and Herbie Hancock, the crew crafted a sound that was equally steeped in past and present, thereby widening its appeal to a diverse range of listeners.

Perhaps taking advantage of his newfound spotlight, Washington dropped *The Epic* just two months after *Butterfly*'s release. He used his platform to promote love and acceptance during a spike in racial tensions in modern-day America. "There's a deeper level of healing that needs to happen for the world in general," Washington told *The Washington Post* at the time. "There's a mass of people who are broken." *The Epic* was a critical darling, lauded for its vast sonic ambition. In 2017, Washington released *Harmony of Difference*, a short follow-up EP that explored the idea of counterpoint, with versions of the same melody appearing in each of its songs. Even though *Harmony* offers all the large-scale resonance one would expect from Washington's work, he also incorporated different sounds into the mix—Brazilian soul and bossa nova—setting the stage for his masterful new double LP.

His latest album, *Heaven and Earth*, is every bit as exploratory, both musically and thematically, as Washington's earlier work. Across 16 tracks and 146 minutes, its extended grooves make this double album nearly impossible to get through in one sitting. Indeed, it takes patience to absorb any of Washington's releases, which, in this era of shorter albums and diminished attention spans, could be a tough ask for potential listeners. But *Heaven and Earth* is incredibly rewarding, full of gospel-centric arrangements that muster serenity in the midst of social and political strife. As with *The Epic*, this music feels shaded by the current climate, though the saxophonist resists being so didactic.

"Someone like Donald Trump can't control the way I show love to my brother. He can't control the way I feel about my neighbors. I'm trying to make the music bigger than the politics," Washington recently told *Rolling Stone*. To that end, *Heaven and Earth* is a meditative recording on which the composer tries to reconcile perception and reality. On the first disc, *Earth*, Washington assesses the world he sees with his eyes—the fight against oppression, the fellowship within different communities, even something as simple and pleasant as a leisurely stroll on a warm summer day.

The opening track, "Fists of Fury," which remakes the theme song of the 1972 kung-fu movie by the same name, marks a radical shift for Washington: It advocates physical force as a way to beat injustice. The lyrics discuss the dichotomy of hands—how they can convey tranquility and affection or display wrath and rage. Here, amid aggressive piano chords, a rolling bass line, a large backing choir, and layered percussion, vocalist Patrice Quinn asserts: "Our time as victims is over / We will no longer ask for justice / Instead, we will take our retribution." Conversely, on "Testify, " a sweet, rom-com-ready track near the end of *Earth*, Quinn draws a direct line to *The Epic*'s standout single, "The Rhythm Changes," using her pitch-perfect voice to exult in love's grand return. On a double album of massive theatrical melodies, it is easily *Heaven and Earth*'s most accessible cut.

The songs on the second disc, *Heaven*, feel more atmospheric, almost cinematic in the way they unfold. "The Space Traveler's Lullaby" is a perfect example: Between its ornate choral moans and swelling brass arrangement, it could easily appear on the soundtrack to the next *Star Wars* or *Black Panther* film. "Vi Lua Vi Sol" is equally resonant, but for different reasons: Written by Washington, it's a gorgeous love letter to the planet, and over a breezy West African dance rhythm, pianist Brandon Coleman orates through a vocoder a rapturous appreciation of the sun, moon, and earth. Near the middle of the 11-minute tune, after a riveting trumpet solo by Dontae Winslow, Washington raises the stakes with a fiery solo on tenor sax. In the end, *Heaven and Earth* is another example of Washington's expert ability to captivate and enlighten through a nuanced blend of jazz, funk, Latin soul, and hip-hop, another bold step in his ascent. ■

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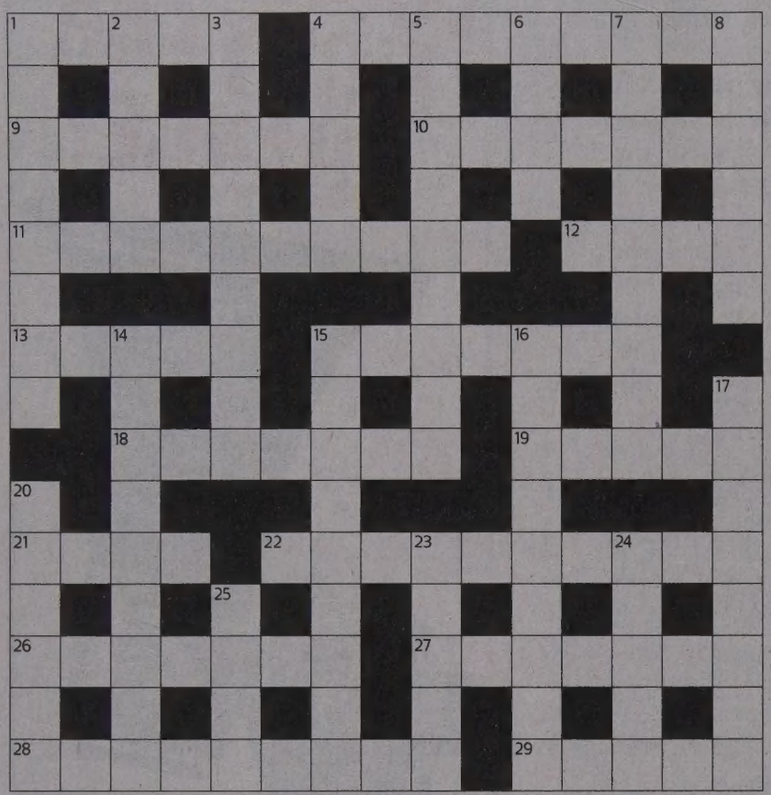
Puzzle No. 3472

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

1 Highest-ranking mountain? That's a laugh! (5)

4 A university kicks final examinations? (9)

9 Start work with a joke, no? (5,2)

10 Old town is opposed to major Republican funder dropping $1,000 (7)

11 Recordings of our cousins running around, stripped nude (10)

12 978-0991245260 for Kosman and Picciotto's latest recycling bins (4)

13 Hearing to bring an action against this woman's bar offering (5)

15 Leaked: Democrat torn (7)

18 Stein, Ben: mostly a piece of work (4,3)

19 Proztific Hungarian composer (5)

21 Like part of a Cartesian plane (4)

22 One place to put options when dealing with "noble savage" (2,3,5)

26 Train worker managed outside mail in error (7)

27 Get cozy with laid-back breakfast choice containing a piece of lox (7)

28 Sense stew cooking with honey (9)

29 Zero to a million and 10 items suggested in 1A and here can be found in the diagram. They are ignored in the wordplay. The End. (5)

DOWN

1 Praise software overseeing big-city utility (8)

2 Had longings where iniquity is rising (5)

3 Deity's dopier hat falling apart (9)

4 What could make you lose sleep: organizations devoted to journalism and cultural funding (5)

5 Incomplete hint involves composer on tour (9)

6 Way to caress Henri's head (4)

7 Strong men, before the middle of the month, put right? No sir! (9)

8 Tin cross is a mysterious figure (6)

14 Support vehicle overturned on scale, concealing identity (9)

15 Rhythmic physical display, holding round mass in upper hand (9)

16 Communist leadership built poor convertible (9)

17 Nearly engrave a word commonly encountered in *Le Monde*, *Time*, and so forth (2,6)

20 Sign of corrosion, for the most part (6)

23 Brazen woman doesn't finish eating kosher shells (5)

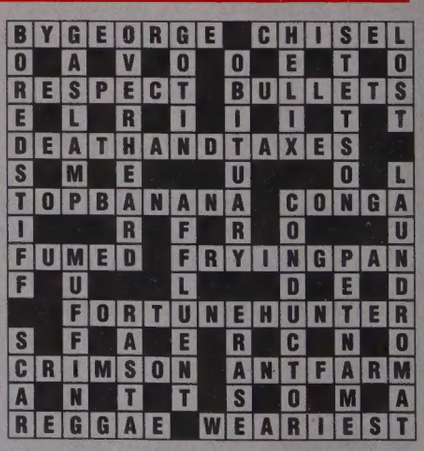
24 Instrument's mixture of blue and green (5)

25 Leave out something said repeatedly by techies (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3471

ACROSS **1** 2 defs. **5** CHIS + EL **10** anag. **11** BULL(ET)S **12** DE(AT HAND)T + AXES (*Ted* rev.) **14** TO + PB + A + NANA **16** CON + GA **17** F(UM)ED **19** "prying fan" **21** FOR TUNE, HUNTER **25** C(RIMS)ON **26** anag. **27** REG(G)AE (rev.) **28** WE(ARIES)T

DOWN **1** "board's tiff" **2** GA(SLAM)P **3** OVERHEA(R)D **4** GO TIN **6** HE(LD)X **7** STET + SON **8** LOS + T **9** anag. **13** anag. **15** A + F + FLU + [g]ENT **16** COND(UCT)OR (*cut* anag.) **18** MUFFIN + G **20** P(ETNA + M)E **22** R AS TA **23** ERAS + E **24** [o]SCAR



The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published 34 times a year (four issues in March, April, and October; three issues in January, February, July, and November; and two issues in May, June, August, September, and December) by The Nation Company, LLC © 2018 in the USA by The Nation Company, LLC, 520 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10018; (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002; (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address, and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 8505, Big Sandy, TX 75755; or call 1-800-333-8536. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Bleuchip International, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2. Canada Post: Publications Mail Agreement No. 40612608. When ordering a subscription, please allow four to six weeks for receipt of first issue and for all subscription transactions. Basic annual subscription price: $69 for one year. Back issues, $6 prepaid ($8 foreign) from: *The Nation*, 520 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10018. If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year. *The Nation* is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Alliance for Audited Media. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Nation*, PO Box 8505, Big Sandy, TX 75755. Printed in the USA.

Cuba

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Peter Kornbluh

Peter

Peter Kornbluh, a longtime *Nation* contributor, serves as the director of the Cuba Documentation Project at the nonprofit National Security Archive. He is the author of several books on Cuba, including *Bay of Pigs Declassified*.

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